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C O N S T A N C E.

A NOVEL.

In a word, my work is digressive, and it is progressive
too, and at the same time.—STERNE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

(SUCCESSOR TO H. COLBURN.)

1833.

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CONSTANCE.

CHAPTER I.

Heaven from all creatures hides the book of fate,
All but the page prescrib'd—their present state.

POPE.

ON the following day, Miss Monckton and Constance were ready at the appointed hour, but they could not prevail on Mrs. Kilderby to accompany them.

“Old women are always in the way,” said she; “I wish you much pleasure, but I shall stay and look after my family at home.”

Mr. Kilderby, his light thin hair at the back of his head brushed till it stood up like stubble in a corn field, his large, blue, unmeaning eyes set off by a fair and feminine complexion, which the absence of mental exertion had left in all its freshness upon his cheeks, and his whole heart full of his own importance; was elate with joy at the prospect of being away from his wife for two or three hours, leading about a beautiful young lady, and exciting much notice in the Pump-room; and his kindly feelings were much excited towards that discriminating female critic, as he called Miss Courtenay, to whom he had been reading his vile poetry at, and since breakfast time.

“Miss Courtenay is looking very well to-day; don’t you think so?” said Miss Monckton to Mrs. Kilderby.

“Yes—she is only too handsome! I don’t like these Sir Charles’s and such like hovering about young girls; they never do them any good. I wish her well married.”

“*Well* married! so do I; but here she comes.”

“Sir Charles is exact to his time,” said

Mr. Kilderby, as the clock struck twelve, and a knock was heard at the door.

“And now, Miss Monckton, how are we to pair off?” said he, looking a little frightened at the thoughts of having Miss Monckton, whom he dreaded as much as if she had been his wife’s vicegerent, for a whole morning.

“I shall be quite offended if you desert me,” said Constance, moving round, and taking his arm.

“What is all this?” inquired Sir Charles, who entered the room at the moment.

“Only Miss Courtenay securing Mr. Kilderby for a companion,” replied Miss Monckton.

Sir Charles looked rather grave.

“I am only too well off to regret my fate,” said he, offering his arm to Miss Monckton, who cast an arch glance at Mrs. Kilderby behind.

“And now, where shall we go to?” cried Mr. Kilderby. “It is too early for the Rooms, or the Crescent, so I propose showing Miss Courtenay——”

“The market,” interposed Mrs. Kilderby. “Young ladies should know such places.”

Sir Charles could not, with all his politeness, help laughing; indeed, Mrs. Kilderby laughed herself.

“Let us go, then,” said Constance; “I never saw a market.” And to the market they went.

The market at Bath is, or it was, in the best days of that once gay city, the most elegant representative of domestic wants that could be imagined. It was thronged with elderly spinsters, some of them of quality, genteel widows, well-dressed housekeepers, half-pay officers, and little dirty errand-boys. As the party passed one of the stalls, they perceived a shabby-looking man with one button off his coat, who was bargaining for some of the previous day’s fruit with a vender. Two parcels lay on the counter, on one of which was a direction—to “Sir Robert Dartmore.” Sir Robert unluckily turned round just as Sir Charles, ashamed of his acquaintance, and meditating an evasion, was moving onwards with Miss Monckton.

Now Sir Robert was not over fond of being seen in his peregrinations to all the cheapest shops in Bath or elsewhere: on these occa-

sions he assumed an impervious look which met your glances, but never seemed to recognize an acquaintance. Sir Charles was relieved, therefore, at the ready skill with which Sir Robert appeared to be wholly occupied with his own thoughts, and would have passed on, when Mr. Kilderby, who had caught the name from Constance, and to whom the term Sir, Lady, Lord, Countess, &c., was sweet as even his favourite "rhythm," caught hold of him.

"Introduce me, my good sir, to Sir Robert Dartmore; I know he'll wish to be introduced to me. He's a literary man, isn't he?"

"O, certainly," said Sir Charles; "but he's gone away, I think."

"Yes, but he's not far; there he is—there he is; you can call him back directly. Do, my good sir: it is such a pity when literary men don't meet."

"Sir Robert, how do you do—and how is Lady Dartmore?" said Sir Charles, his manner somewhat more lofty than usual, for he began to feel that to associate with a man whose habits were so unlike his station, cast its degrading influence over him also. Perhaps it was also in

his recollection that Constance disliked Lady Dartmore; and, on the whole, he was particularly vexed to find that they had come to Bath.

“Why, you are coming to Bath just as the season is over. You will find it very dull—at least Lady Dartmore will.”

“We had a house lent us by a friend,” said Sir Robert, in his usual low, mumbling voice, and holding his head down, for it was Saturday; and he was not one of those extravagant men who put on clean shirts and cravats every day.

“Well, I hope you will like Bath,” returned Sir Charles, “though I confess I fear you will find very few people here that you know. Will you allow me to introduce this gentleman, Mr. Kilderby, to you?”

Mr. Kilderby took off his hat, bowed with much parade, and began a speech, in which the words “Sir Robert” were heard at least four times, whilst his light hair dancing to the wind, and his shining forehead gleaming to the sun, all the people around turned to look at him, which was what he enjoyed. Sir Robert would have taken off his, but for sundry reasons, relative to the lining, which, report says, he was

wont to have replenished with his wife's old gloves. He slightly touched, therefore, the brim of a thing, from which the faintest trace of the article beaver had long since departed.

"Sir Robert Dartmore is well known to me by classical report," said the man of verse, "and I flatter myself that I am not unknown to him."

Sir Robert gave one of his impervious looks, and was silent.

"If you are not already known to each other, I hope I have made you so," said Sir Charles, bowing, and moving away, not much liking greetings in the market-place. But Mr. Kilderby remained behind, presenting his card to Sir Robert, with, "I shall do myself the honour of calling, and hope to bring Mrs. Kilderby to pay her respects to Lady Dartmore," though he knew all the while that Mrs. Kilderby would not go. Meanwhile Constance was left, during this ceremonial, standing alone; and was compelled, whether reluctantly or not let a quorum of young ladies decide, to take Sir Charles's arm. She could not help fancying that she saw an expression of lively

emotion in his face, as she found herself once more walking with him in that intimacy which she had supposed to have died away for ever. "I am afraid," said she, wishing to break the silence which ensued, and not knowing into what subject to rush, she chose the first that occurred to her—"I am afraid that I should never be fond of housekeeping."

"You will never marry any one in a station of life to require it, I hope," said Miss Monckton.

"Why does she begin upon that point?" thought Constance.

"Where are you posting to?" cried Mr. Kilderby, who overtook them. "Which lady am I now to have?"

"Me, if you please," said Miss Monckton, nimbly drawing back, and leaving Sir Charles and Constance alone together. They were both silent for a few minutes, Constance, angry with herself, for not being able to begin, and yet, as it were, spell-bound to silence.

"I am afraid it is very unpleasant to you, Miss Courtenay, to change your companion," observed Sir Charles, at last.

“Do you think me of so poetical a turn then, that I can like no conversation but that of Mr. Kilderby?”

“No; but I was sure that you would prefer any to mine.”

“That is not very complimentary to the author of *Clorintha*.”

“Nor is it very gratifying to me,” answered Sir Charles, “to be put upon an equality with him, in your estimation.”—A pause ensued. “Do tell me something about Newberry—dear Newberry,” said Sir Charles, “where we—I mean, where I have passed so many happy hours:—is—is Bouverie well, and happy?”

“He is quite well—whether he is happy or not, I do not know.”

“Then if *you* do not know, I don’t know who should, for much of his happiness, I rather think, rests with you.”

“What do you mean?” asked Constance, indignantly.

“Pardon me, I know I am wrong, but forgive me, if I only allude to the report of all the town of Newberry.”

“There are other reports in Newberry, besides that,” said Constance.

“And all may be equally unfounded,” returned Sir Charles.—Another pause ensued.—“I am sure,” again began Sir Charles, “I ought only to be too happy if one of these reports prove to be true—I feel so strong a regard for Bouverie—I love him as a brother—his mind is so highly cultivated—his principles so excellent—his heart so warm—”

“If you are recommending him to me,” answered Constance, “I can forgive you in your desire to extol a friend; and I can join enthusiastically in any tribute to Mr. Bouverie’s merits. But if you go on, persisting in any notion of his interest in me, or mine in him, you will drive me back again to Mr. Kilderby.”

“I will not let you go,” said Sir Charles, gently holding the hand which rested on his arm. Only answer me one question, and I will endeavour to abide by the result, whatever it may cost me. Are you aware of the state of Bouverie’s mind, and is your own made up with regard to him?”

“I know not, Sir Charles, by what right you are authorized to ask,” replied Constance.

“Only the right, which a strong, and I had hoped, an understood attachment to you, may give: but if the question embarrasses you, I will not press it. I will endeavour to rejoice, and to wish that those whom I so much envy and admire—may be happy.”

“Sir Charles, where are you posting to?” cried Mr. Kilderby.—“You are quite in the wrong road to the Crescent.”

Sir Charles made no other reply than crossing over the road.

“I see,” said he, with an air of inexpressible distress, “that you will not answer me, Miss Courtenay—you have my secret, but you refuse your confidence to me. How can I venture,” he continued, “to pour forth my feelings to you, when I may be acting both dishonourably and unfairly by my best friend—one who attended me as a brother, during a long and dangerous illness—one to whose counsels I owe all the little virtue that is in me—one, whom I would die rather than betray. Permit me,

then, again, to ask you this question. Are you not engaged?"

"No; I am not," said Constance, after a pause, with a firm voice, which softened, however, when she looked at the expression of deep anxiety, which was visible on Sir Charles's face.

"I mean," said he, correcting himself—"and I have a right, for my own peace of mind, to ask it—are not your affections engaged?"

"I cannot say that they are not," said Constance, after a moment's pause, "but not"—she was about to add—"to Mr. Bouverie."

"But not to Mr. Bouverie?—perhaps to ——"

"You have no right to any further confession from me," cried Constance; "nor can it matter to you, Sir Charles, to know the state of my feelings. This much only I can say, that had I been attached to Mr. Bouverie, and he to me, it would perhaps have been happier for me; but my die is cast, and God only knows how it may prosper me, or sink me for ever in wretchedness."

“Sir Charles,” said Mr. Kilderby, now coming up to them, “you are leading Miss Courtenay away from the Crescent.”

“Excuse me,” said Constance, “if I decline going farther. I wish to go home.”

“Have I fatigued you?” said Sir Charles, with the greatest tenderness—“fatigued you both bodily and mentally, I fear. O if you would but open your whole heart to me—if you but knew mine—you would be assured that there is no sacrifice I could not make to secure your affections, if I indeed possess them; nor any effort which I would not make to promote the object of them, if they are bestowed upon another.”

“I cannot speak to you now upon this subject,” said Constance; “I must consult my only friend, Miss Monckton. I must consult, not my own heart, for that would mislead me, but my judgment.”

“And consult only that, my dearest Miss Courtenay; let me entreat you to appeal to no other friend. I have reasons which would render such a confidence wholly destructive to all my hopes.”

“Can that love be hallowed—can that tie be free from reproach, which requires such secrecy?” demanded Constance.

“I will explain all,” said Sir Charles. “At present, I will conduct you home, and leave you, if you will secure to me the opportunity which I require.”

“I will, if I may,” answered Constance; “I will consult Miss Monckton.”

“Nay, that is telling her the very conversation, Constance. Yet, do as you will: disingenuous you cannot be.”

“And never will be, I hope,” said Constance, as they parted; and she ran hastily into her own room.

I must here pause in my narrative, to make one observation. Doubtless the formal and the ignorant will cavil at a love-scene which took place in the streets of Bath; but connoisseurs will know better. There could, at that time, scarcely be a finer spot for a confession on either side. The blushes of the lady may be mistaken by spectators for those of haste or nervousness; her sighs are wafted away amid the din of carriages; her very words glide more easily, when

all are talking round her. The only fault which Sir Charles found with the place, was that it was too quiet; for Bath was becoming empty, and his blooming companion attracted more notice than was at all convenient, considering the subject of their discourse.

Miss Monckton tapped gently at the door of Constance, but scarcely waited for a reply before she entered. She found her friend in that sort of reverie, between pain and pleasure, wherein the features seem to express discordant emotions. A smile was on her lips, yet her eyes were filled with tears; her hands were clasped, and the long ringlets of her chesnut hair almost concealed the blushes which glowed upon her cheeks. She started up as Miss Monckton entered, and throwing her arms around her, she exclaimed, "It is as you said—and he loves me!"

"Well, and what is the harm of that?—and why do you drown me with these silly tears? Do you suppose you are never to have pretty things said to you? or that you are to be Miss Courtenay all your life?"

"No; but I know not how to act—whether to accept him, or to—to—refuse him."

“Refuse him!—why? Patience befriend me! what should you refuse him for? Refuse him! you’ll never have such an offer again— young ladies are really enough to drive one mad!”

“O Miss Monckton! he talks of concealments, and obstacles; and something whispers me that there is danger in our engagement—that distress and disappointment will come of it.”

“Fie, fie, Constance! Sir Charles comes of an honourable house, and is incapable of baseness. Confide in him, and comply with any restrictions which he may deem needful. He is constrained by many obligations to family connexions; his affairs are still embarrassed, and it may possibly be some time before he can offer a suitable home to the object of his choice. But is Constance mercenary? Will she not wear the ‘plumed and jewelled turban’ of rank, unless the plume be of the greatest magnitude, and the jewel of the brightest water? For shame!—for shame!”

“You mistake me,” said Constance, drying up her tears. “I never thought of these mat-

ters. God knows," she continued, raising her eyes to heaven, "I would pledge my faith to him as he is—nay poor—in preference to any man breathing. But I cannot consent to give his proposals even a thought, when I do, in my conscience, fear that some previous betrothment—some interested entanglement, endangers his honour in addressing me. I love him too well, to bear the thought of a stain upon the purity of his character."

"Ask him, ask him!" cried Miss Monckton; "surely you will believe his assertion. I will stake all that I possess, that the story of his engagement is a fabrication of Lady Dartmore to keep off the herd of young ladies that would otherwise be pecking at him. But when are you to see him again?"

"To-day—this afternoon; he wishes me—but how that is to be managed without Mrs. Kilderby's animadversions, or Mr. Kilderby's recording it in poetry, I know not."

"Oh! I will contrive it. We will walk out together, and then we will part, and leave you to enjoy the full explanation of all that he wishes to impart. Come, now, what ails you?"

“I know not ; but I feel as if I were on the verge of a precipice. But I will subdue these childish fears : allow me but a little time, and you will see me quite —quite, myself.”

Scarcely two hours had elapsed since this conversation, and Constance was in her own room, when the arrival of Sir Charles Marchmont was announced to her ; but Constance, irresolute and low-spirited, still lingered over her toilet, when Miss Monckton, out of all patience, came up to hurry her down stairs.

“Do make haste, Constance,” cried this warm, but injudicious friend, “for Mr. Kilderby is preparing to read his Chronicle of Bath, which will take at least two hours ; come now, that will do, why are you tying that veil on ?”

“Sir Charles looks most disconsolate,” continued Miss Monckton ; “I do think you slily refused him this morning, and never told me of it.”

“No—no ; though, perhaps, I ought to have done so,” said Constance, with a faint smile, succeeded by a deep sigh.

“I have had but little experience in these

matters," thought Miss Monckton, as they went down stairs, "but I do not see any thing so very tremendous in one of the most elegant and accomplished men I know, paying his devoirs to a lady suitable in age and rank, and very deeply in love with him, say what she will."

They set off to walk, and Miss Monckton declaring that she must go to her milliner's, inflicted no small torture on her companions, by leading them into the very heart of Bath, before they parted from her. She pressed the hand of Constance with fervent affection, and the lovers found themselves again alone together.

"Have you thought of what I said to you, Constance," said Sir Charles, as soon as they were released, and without waiting till they got out of the crowded streets into the beautiful walks in the neighbourhood of Bath.

"How could I help thinking about it?" asked Constance, endeavouring to arouse herself from her nervous agitation, to some degree of her wonted spirits. "You have placed me in a situation altogether new to me."

"But you have had some *little* experience in

these matters," said Sir Charles, looking at her full in the face.

"Before I give you the benefit of my experience, I shall call upon you for yours ; you know what has for some time been the prevalent rumour, at Newberry."

"O Constance," exclaimed Sir Charles, "dismiss that report at once from your mind. I am yours, and yours only."

"There is Mrs. De Courcy——"

"O do not be afraid, Constance, that I should think of entrapping so disconsolate a widow into a second snare, or be so cruel as to change so pretty and Frenchified a name as hers, into the vile, harsh cognomen, Marchmont. But have you done? Perhaps I may begin to enumerate a few disappointed swains. I shall commence with the army list ——"

"O no, no," cried Constance, "do not bring to recollection the horrors of that day, when you made common cause against me with Lady Dartmore. I suppose you will be adding the Mr. Tribes next?"

"Why, Mr. James, the man of figure, did give some very tender glances, aslant, as I re-

member. But now, tell me, Constance, what made you behave so ill to me that day? And why did you send me off to London in the most miserable state of mind that could be?"

"Nay, that is easily accounted for—Lady Dartmore—but before I tell my story, do you tell yours. How came you to be so indifferent, and so sarcastic?"

"And did you mind about my indifference? but I have the same answer that you gave; in two words—Lady Dartmore."

"She told me," said Constance, "that you were engaged to Miss Herbert."

"And me," said Sir Charles, "that you had been coquetting with Captain Powis. But now, Constance, I want to have a little serious conversation with you; time passes, and I have much to say, and something, I hope, to hear in return."

As he spoke, they had emerged into a broad, but winding road, richly shaded by hedge-row elms, the young shoots of which were just budding forth, presenting the strong contrast of the

light green of the foliage with the dark, and, as yet, still naked stems and branches of the trees. Sir Charles, who was well acquainted with the neighbourhood, led his fair companion into a path which deviated from the road, into some adjoining pasture land. The breezes of an April day, and the consciousness of being severally with the object of fond attachment, gave to this graceful pair, as they walked along, the glow of health, and the beaming countenance of happiness. They trod the greensward elate with joy, and so replete with unrepressed devotion to each other, that the fulness of their hearts was forced to restrain itself in silence. Who could have anticipated the sorrow, regret, and self-reproach, to which this long-remembered interview eventually gave rise? At length Sir Charles entered fully into the explanation of his wishes, and hopes, and prospects, at least he portrayed the two first faithfully, but of the latter, a portion was reserved, which had it been disclosed to Constance, would have overwhelmed her with dismay. Unhappily for her, and for himself, Sir

Charles was one of those engaging, but erring persons, whose conduct, proceeding from inclination, without the regulation of principle, is amiable at times by chance, but much oftener wrong by design. With many noble sentiments, with some good intentions, and with a temper naturally frank and cordial, Sir Charles contrived, not exactly to disguise his natural character, but to make his failings appear like virtues. On the present occasion, he succeeded both in satisfying Constance of his attachment, and in allaying her fears of any previous bond which it might sully his honour to break.

“Will you not confide in me?” he said. And she was too prone to confide, and too devoted to him, to answer in the negative.

“To-morrow,” said Sir Charles, “I must leave you; for I have business of importance in London. I would have stayed, were it for a year, to have secured the only chance of happiness that this world affords to me; that blessed point achieved, I must reserve all our future hours of love, and joy, for Newberry. Meantime, dearest Constance, keep this bauble in remem-

brance, not only of me, but of one of whom, with all her errors, I cannot but cherish the recollection—of my mother. This portrait,” said he, as he placed in her hands a very small miniature of himself, attached to links of gold, “was painted for that most unfortunate, yet most beloved of mothers.—She used to wear it clasped round her neck,” he continued, “and, perhaps, with all her purity, and with all her high-mindedness, my Constance will not disdain to let me clasp that which has been worn by a sinning mortal, round hers?”

“I will, indeed, place it myself,” replied Constance; “but I cannot wear your image, however dear to me I may own it to be, displaying, too plainly, the presiding genius over my affections.”

“Well, there is a remedy for that,” said Sir Charles; “reverse the clasp, and you will find the other side exhibits nothing but a lock of youthful hair, cut off when I was happy—and innocent.”

“And why that sigh? are you not happy now?” asked Constance.

“ I am far happier than I deserve. But, Constance !—weeks must elapse before we meet again ; and weeks, and months, and years revolve, before we are indissolubly united. Can you wonder that my heart is heavy ;—that my mind recurs to the ill-fated career of my parents, to the lot that has attended some of my family ? And then, I have a thousand fears, lest you may be influenced against me, lest—Bouverie—”

“ Mr. Bouverie is incapable of acting basely towards you, Sir Charles,” said Constance, the colour mounting to her face. “ His generous nature harbours no suspicions of his friends.”

“ That is a severe reflection upon me, Miss Courtenay,” replied the Baronet, after a moment’s pause.

“ And did you not merit it ? To imagine that so true, so partial a friend, could ever think, much less breathe, a syllable to your disadvantage—or that I would listen to it ?”

“ I was wrong ; but a singular prepossession in my own mind may excuse it. Do you know, that when I saw you first in the old church at Newberry, an idea took possession of my mind, that you would marry Bouverie ?”

“ Mr. Bouverie is much indebted to you,” said Constance.

“ And so firmly has this unaccountable notion rooted itself in my mind ; and so anxious, so foolishly anxious am I to prevent any possibility of future confidence between you, that I am about to make you a very foolish and unnecessary request—will you grant it ?”

“ You have already made several, so that I know not what I can say ; but I will, if it be within the verge of reason.”

“ It is, that happen what will, you will never disclose to Bouverie, or to any person likely to reveal it to him, the mutual understanding which subsists between us, until the happy preliminaries are all arranged.”

“ O that is easily granted : I am not at all likely to make a confidant of Mr. Bouverie, nor of any one on such a subject—except one person,” said she, blushing. “ And I must take care to conceal this foolish business from all Newberry, otherwise he would hear of it instantly ; for I fancy,” she continued, looking down, “ that some of the ladies there, would have no objection to tell him. But I can readily promise you, that never,

under any circumstances, will I disclose it to Mr. Bouverie, unless you should be married to Miss Herbert," she added, laughing: "but why," observing a change overspreading his countenance, "why that sad look?"

As she spoke, they ascended an eminence, the summit of which was crowned with a thick grove of Elm and Sycamore, now partially in leaf; but sufficiently disclosed for their outspreading branches to form a canopy of that rich verdure, which is perhaps peculiar to the midland counties of England. Beneath, amid the long and tangled grass, the snowdrop had given place to the melancholy primrose, and to the purple promise of the wild hyacinth, fringing the narrow paths, which the foot of the rambler, or the track of animals had made. The lovers walked into the very midst of the wood, and Sir Charles was beginning to vindicate himself from the charge of sadness, when a trifling circumstance occurred, which added to the gloom, which had at intervals, even during the brightest periods of their walk, overshadowed his expressive countenance. They had reached the extremity of the grove, and were standing upon

a natural platform of turf, whence they commanded an extensive and smiling prospect of hamlet, hill, and dale, when Constance pointed out to her companion, the airy circles of a kite, pursuing with the most refined manœuvres of natural instinct, its prey. The keen aspect of the bird, its determined pursuit, and unrelenting grasp of its victim, might furnish to the contemplative mind too sure an emblem of human selfishness and vengeance. Whilst they yet gazed, a rustling among the branches above them, announced that the pursuer had lost the object of his eager chace, which fell indeed, fluttering and bleeding, on the shoulder of Sir Charles. It was a young ring-dove, probably just emerged into its career of a thoughtless existence : in a few minutes it expired in Sir Charles's hands. Constance felt that compassion for the little sufferer which is natural, whether we contemplate the injured, either in human society, or among the dumb portion of creation ; but her astonishment was somewhat aroused at the deep impression which this incident appeared to make upon her companion. A deep sigh broke from him, as he

buried the hapless dove under some withered leaves. For some moments afterwards, he could not recover his composure, and as they returned homewards, he frequently recurred to the fate of the poor bird, with a solemnity which, in the opinion of Constance, gave the occurrence far more importance than it deserved.

CHAPTER II.

Imogen. My lord, I fear,
Has forgot Britain.

CYMBELINE.

IN less than a month Miss Monckton and Constance returned to Newberry, where it was the expectation of both that they should meet Sir Charles, who had left Bath the day after the incident which the last chapter relates. Constance had received frequent and almost daily letters from him, written with great inequality of spirits. Sometimes he spoke joyfully of their union being accomplished; in other letters, whilst he pined for her society, he seemed to hint that it would be long before he could enjoy it again. The only comfort that

he gave her was the fervent assurance of his affection, and the expressions of that affection seemed to be so ardent and so genuine, that Constance was amply consoled for all other evils. Her own attachment grew more rapidly than ever during absence. In all the gay circles of Bath, if she saw some handsomer, many richer, and many more learned men, she saw none so refined, so elegant, so truly the representative of that comprehensive word, *gentleman*. She sighed again to observe those accomplishments of manner which made the simplest language, the most unimportant action, interesting and graceful. She began, like most fond people in absence, to overrate the numerous advantages and attractions of him to whom her youthful heart was devoted, and to feel languid, and indifferent to all society of which he did not form a part. Above all, an earnest desire to return to Newberry, where his image, even if himself were absent, prevailed, took possession of her mind; and observing her wishes, Miss Monckton hastened her departure from Bath.

“ I cannot think what Sir Charles is about,”

thought that good lady to herself, as she prepared for her return home. "It is the most uncomfortable courtship I ever saw. She has obviously a want of confidence in him, and he, it is plain, holds back some obstacles to their marriage which he dares not communicate. Poor Constance!—I begin almost to think that she had better have had Bouverie."

The day of their journey at length arrived. Constance, with real gratitude, bade adieu to Mrs. Kilderby; and, laden with elegies, odes, tragedies, epics, and the smaller fry of madrigals, sonnets, and impromptus, from her rhyming husband, she stepped into the carriage with a heart full of anticipation. But think not, reader of sixteen, that her heart was gay and bounding as when she *went* to Bath: a heavy load seemed now to weigh down her once buoyant spirits; yet, such is the infatuation of love's victims, that she would not have exchanged the new interests, hopes, and fears which she now cherished, for the contentment (which now she called a void) that she had previously enjoyed. A moral essay on this subject were needless. It is seldom that the errors

which the young and the romantic indulge upon this subject are not effectually and cruelly cured by the mortifications of experience.

Constance seemed to breathe more easily as the carriage drove up the once detested High Street of Newberry. "We are near him now," thought she; "doubtless he is already here. He said it would be a month, and now he knows of my return."

She was disappointed. Mrs. Cattell—who, though she seemed to doze all day like a cat upon a rug, knew every thing that passed in Newberry, as ladies who sit ever by their firesides always do—said, in reply to Miss Monckton, "that Sir Charles Marchmont was not at the Priory, nor expected, that she knew of."

The heart of Constance died within her at this intelligence, whilst Miss Monckton internally ejaculated, "Ah me! why is woman ever so much more faithful and fond than man?"

"But he will come to-morrow, dear Miss Monckton, I know he will," said Constance, as they parted for the night. Yet on the morrow he came not.

“By Sunday,” thought the sanguine Constance. “By Sunday I shall see him; we shall meet where we first met—where, if the will of Heaven permit, we shall meet never to part again.”

To Sunday she directed all her hopes, and resolved to take no count of the intervening days. Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, passed wearily away, and Constance almost fancied that the clocks were clogged with lead. On the Saturday she attained her eighteenth year, a period of life in which few young women had their future lot apparently so much decided as hers. Yet her mind was harassed by contending emotions, which blanched her cheek, and dimmed the sparkling beams of her laughing eyes. But, with a temperament naturally ardent, and great elasticity of mind, she resolved to shake off every thing but hope, and that to which she clung as to her dearest treasure, the knowledge of Sir Charles's affection.

“Would that I could put my mind in a proper train for my sacred duties to-morrow,” thought she, as she paced along Mr. Cattell's

old-fashioned garden, and raised her eyes to the noble tower of the church. As she gazed upon it, a light, probably carried by some person inspecting the belfry, passed rapidly across one of its gothic windows.

“Alas!” thought she, “perhaps like that transitory gleam, my hopes may pass away, and nothing but darkness and despair be left. I will not think it; the great Supreme, whom we adore within that sacred pile, will surely protect the helpless from injury, and prosper the ways of the innocent.”

And Constance hoped not in vain; but, through sorrow and prostration of spirit, was she decreed to work out her way to that peace of mind which the world can neither give nor take away.

On the Sabbath-day she rose full of hope, and with her devotional reflections not a little intermingled with thoughts of her earthly love. yet He, who has given us human affections and human frailties, will not surely be extreme to mark our erring fancies, even when they interfere with his worship, provided they be innocent. The devout, the earnest, the trusting,

hoping spirit of Jeremy Taylor acknowledged it to be difficult to utter even ten lines of prayer without our attention wandering; and when woman's earliest love is awakened, surely saints might excuse, and angels pity, some moments given to her fond, but pure affection. With a throbbing heart Constance entered the sacred edifice, through which the sublime strains of the hundredth psalm were then resounding, awakening in the scientific hearer a tribute to the memory of Handel. It was a fortnight since she had received any tidings of Sir Charles, yet for this she simply accounted by the thought, so rapturous in absence, "He will not write, he is coming." Sir Charles had never resumed his own seat at church, for, from the plea that it was better occupied in being lent to a neighbour's numerous family, he had still begged to occupy a corner in Mr. Cattell's ample parlour pew. It was therefore with confident expectations of seeing him in his accustomed nook beside a gothic pillar, that Constance followed Mrs. Cattell into the pew. He was not there, and she flung herself in an agony of disappointment upon her knees. For

once, the service of her Creator seemed to give no relief to the anguish of mortified affection, of fear, and uncertainty, which she felt. By degrees, however, the varied sentiments conveyed in our Common Prayer found their way to her heart, and she wept, contrite for having dared in God's house to lay aside her confidence in divine goodness, her submission to his will, her entire devotion to his worship. Simple in her religious tenets, and attached to the Church of England for no wiser reason than that she had been educated in it, it may humbly be presumed that if her religion tended to reconcile her to God's dispensations, to calm her passions under a sense of His peculiar presence, to trust in the goodness of others, to suffer without repining, it was of the right sort.

"You look very ill, Miss Courtenay," was Mrs. Crawford's congratulatory address to Constance, as they came out of church.

"I am told Sir Charles was not long at Bath after you went there," observed Miss Pearson, who acted on most occasions as an avant courier for Mrs. De Courcy. The three Miss Seagraves hobbled after her as fast as

they could, to note down the colour of her new bonnet ; but the gait of these ladies was inimical to speed. One of them was purblind, and consequently afraid of moving on rashly ; another had a turned-in ancle ; the third was regularly lame. Having the advantage of them, therefore, although they were three to one, Constance cleared the crossing to her guardian's house, shook off Miss Pearson and Mrs. Crawford, and was meditating a visit to Miss Monckton, when she encountered Dr. Clayton and Mr. Wakley.

The Doctor was bustling up from an adjacent village, where he had been preaching, and was in all the majesty of a semi-circular protuberant wig, a black velvet coat, and diamond knee-buckles. He walked, as was his wont, with his fat stumpy hands clasped behind him, and was turning round every moment to address some disorderly little boys who were calling after him. Sam, his grand vizier, marched rather on one side, carrying the Doctor's huge black silk gown, which being very stiff, and having acquired that look of a person which the habiliments they wear often assume, had excited the observation of the chil-

dren, and they were crying out, "There be two parsons; there be two parsons!" Mr. Wakley, in full canonicals, with a sneer on his arch face, was the first to recognize Constance, and to determine that she should not pass them: he pointed her out to the Doctor, who instantly began his usually noisy compliments.

"Miss Courtenay, I am very happy to see you. Mary Clayton will be very happy to see you; she is calling upon that saucy she-thing, Jane Monckton. I pray you come with us, and let us make a trial of the spinster's hospitality."

But Constance was not in a humour to parade up the street with Dr. Clayton and Mr. Wakley, backed by a ragged regiment of boys, which reputable cavalcade stopped when the Doctor stopped to speak to Miss Courtenay, and moved on when the Doctor moved on. The scene afforded no little diversion to the grave gossip Miss Pearson, and to the inquisitive, sarcastic Mrs. Crawford, who, under pretence of bidding good-morning to the Miss Seagraves, were standing at the opposite corner of the street. The latter-mentioned ladies too, though

distanced by Constance, were now, as they said, better off than if they had overtaken her, as they had now time not only to observe her bonnet, but her new pelisse ; and whilst they were about it, must needs observe that her complexion was not improved by the air of Bath. Parties were thus situated, when Mr. Bouverie, who was going to his solitary house after church, passed Dr. Clayton, and his unwilling captive, Miss Courtenay. He was instantly seized on by the Doctor, who, if he really respected any one, respected this conscientious, benevolent, and intelligent young man, whose virtues were exercised without the smallest portion of that spiritual pride which often makes one dislike notorious excellence ; and besides, Dr. Clayton had known Mr. Bouverie from his infancy.

“ Henry Bouverie,” said he, “ I order you to conduct that refractory young lady to Miss Monckton’s shrine, there to see the beauty and holiness of celibacy :—take her off, and as your young legs are nimble, warn the good spinster that we come after you to luncheon.”

“ To nunccheon, good Doctor,” said Mr. Wakley, who took this mode of flattering the

Doctor's peculiarities, one of which was to insist upon the use of that word, from its derivation noon-cheon.

"Ay, right ; thou hast said well, my boy, but we must adapt our discourse to vulgar ears : " (this was was by no means in an under tone.)

"Go to, walk on, reverend Father of St. Michael's aisles," said he to Mr. Bouverie.

"I am much obliged and honoured by your kind wishes, but I will pay my adorations to Miss Monckton on a week day," replied that gentleman ; "but I shall be most happy to conduct Miss Courtenay——"

"Any where, I have no doubt," interrupted Mr. Wakley in a low tone.

"But what, ho ! the saucy puss is flown !" exclaimed the Doctor, for Constance was no longer visible.

"There," said Miss Pearson, who was still witnessing the whole scene, "she has run away, but Mr. Bouverie has not thought proper to run after her."

"She gave him a tolerable hint, however ; as young ladies seldom run away unless they wish for pursuit," added Mrs. Crawford jocularly.

“After all,” replied Miss Pearson, “I don’t believe our vicar is fairly in for it, neither.”

“There is no judging by appearances, my dear young friend,” answered the widow; “but the bells will be chiming for afternoon prayers soon, I fear.”

When Constance entered her guardian’s parlour, she found Mrs. Cattell in considerable perturbation; for a letter, announcing an unexpected addition to her domestic circle, had just arrived.

“Mr. Cattell has some news for you, Miss Courtenay,” she said, with something very like a scowl on her brow.

News from Mr. Cattell sounded as strange as if one announced a cargo of fruit from the land of the Esquimaux, or a present of ices from Timbuctoo. Constance hastened to her guardian.

“Your sister Emily is ill,” said he; “it is very awkward, a young lady’s being ill under age.”

“Good heavens! sir, let me, I entreat you, know the whole extent; I am prepared for the worst,” said Constance, sinking down on a chair, and turning pale as death.

“ I am not warranted to say that Miss Emily Courtenay is ill, so as to endanger life, or to render you sole heiress of the property bequeathed you conjointly by my friend Colonel Courtenay, of the second regiment of dragoon guards.—You had better have some hartshorn, miss.”

“ O no, sir ; be so kind as to proceed ; and, if agreeable to you, without touching upon other matters, tell me at once what is my sister’s ailment,” exclaimed Constance, with a burst of impatience which almost drove away Mr. Cattell’s seven senses without hope of their return.

“ But first, to make a few arrangements,” answered he phlegmatically, “ before going into de-details, which we can rehearse and set forth after dinner : Mrs. Cattell is very particular as to her hours ; she is a little upset also, at the pros-prospect of having another boarder—I mean inmate so—so soon, for you are young enough to be at school, miss, I think, but it was your good father’s wish that you should leave before seventeen ; in compliance with which you have been resident here sixteen months, come Candlemas-day.”

“ But my sister,” cried Constance, “ my sister—what is her complaint ?”

“ You can both sleep in one room, I reckon,” resumed Mr. Cattell, “ and then Mrs. C— will not be so much put out. She is afraid all her servants will leave her, but that is hardly likely, I think. Thomas has been with us say, for saying’s sake, seventeen years ; Mitten, some fourteen ; the housekeeper lived here in my mother’s days. I do not think you need fret yourself about that, Miss Courtenay.”

“ But Emily,” reiterated Constance, “ what is the matter with her?—May I go to her ? Have they had the very first advice for her ? Is there—is there any fear of her life ?”

“ For advice, physician’s fees inclusive, they charge me, on account of Miss Emily Courtenay, infant,” said Mr. Cattell, looking at some papers, “ some thirty-six pounds five shillings and odd pence—a very large bill the apothecary’s—draughts, nine per diem, sixteen pounds. It is not proper on a Sunday to be looking over these things, but I may say, at a guess, Double-dose would have done the thing for half the sum.”

“ May I see the letters, and then I can tell, sir,” said Constance, who in her agony of suspense had forgotten that Mr. Cattell’s understanding was one of that order which travels from minutiae up to great events, not having at all a grasp to seize the notion of an important occurrence at once.

“ Why, yes; but you will find very little more in them than what I have told you, except this—that my ward, Miss Emily Courtenay, comes here by a safe opportunity on Wednesday evening next, the 28th day of April.— Shall I ring the bell, miss? You seem vapourish, or perhaps disposed to hysterics. Mrs. Cattell was much given to these disorders in her younger days. I forget now what Dr. Double-dose used to prescribe for her—some proportions of dil water, and ether, at least I conceit it to be so.”

“ I am much obliged to you, sir; but if you will kindly lend me the letter, I shall be myself again presently.—O, I see,” cried she, her eyes swimming with tears of joy, “ that Emily’s illness is not serious—growing too fast—dislike to her lessons. I don’t wonder, I am

sure—pining to see her sister? And she will see her,” added Constance, springing up in an ecstasy of delight.

“Thank you, thank you, dear sir, for allowing poor Emily to come here.”

“Mrs. Cattell does not much like the charge of two young ladies, though,” said Mr. Cattell; “our servants have as much as they can do: but I conceit, that we shall not long have you, Miss Constance.

The face of his ward exhibited some confusion.

“I have no objection,” pursued the old gentleman, “to give my consent even before the year 17—, when, please God, you will attain your twenty-first year. Your good father left instructions in his will that you should not be hindered nor let of marrying after your mind, provided due settlements were made; though, in my day, young ladies were in no such hurry; Mrs. Cattell being, as her settlement saith, twenty-seven years and two months old, on the very day that instrument was drawn up: but I make no objection, it is no odds to me; perhaps you will wish me to speak to Mr. Bouverie

about the settlements?—Why, how now? hoity toity! Let me see; the living of Newberry is some four hundred per annum. There is no need to hang your head about it, miss, nor to pace about after that fashion. No doubt the vicar is agreeable.”

“The old gentleman is very anxious to get rid of me,” thought Constance, “and I am happy to find he is at present not too well informed.”

“Well, Miss Courtenay, you will consult Mrs. Cattell about this matter. For settlements, I can recommend my lawyer, Tidmas; besides, he is our vicar’s churchwarden, so I conceit the wind will all blow the same way. Ay! ay! Newberry’s a fine place for these matters. Why, I should never have thought of Mrs. Cattell, if it had not been for playing at quadrille with her every other night for two years. There’s nothing puts a lady so much in a man’s head, to my mind, as dealing to her every night.”

“Unluckily I never play at cards,” replied Constance; “but, sir, I am duly sensible of the excellent example which Mrs. Cattell sets

me in all respects ; and since you say that she attained her twenty-seventh year without marrying, will it not be fitting that I should do the same ?”

The old gentleman looked a little puzzled.

“ With regard to Mr. Bouverie, as he has never made any proposals of marriage to me, I shall be much obliged to you, sir, not to make any of settlements to him, with all due respect to Mr. Tidmas, who will, I have no doubt, make matters very smooth to those who are already on the road to matrimony, but cannot accommodate those who have no desire to travel that way.” And in a more serious tone, she added, “ You have been quite misinformed, my dear sir, about Mr. Bouverie, and I trust to your kind assistance to contradict a report which is so unpleasant to me.”

Mr. Cattell was considerably flustered. He repeated several times, “ I conceited—I conceited, Miss Courtenay—are you right in your mind about Mr. Bouverie? Mrs. Cattell must have dreamt it. Good Lord ! what heavy charges young ladies are ! I conceited that it would be so.”

Meantime Constance escaped to her favourite place of meditation, the garden, in order to dwell undisturbed upon the mingled anticipations which presented themselves to her mind. Her waking hours were restless, her slumbers were disturbed, until Emily, her own Emily, arrived at Newberry. Even to those rich in blessings, the connexion between sisters is peculiarly endearing, and has almost a holy charm in it; but to Constance, Emily constituted all the sum of her natural ties; and, before her attachment to Sir Charles, these young orphans were all in all to each other, and Constance loved her sister with an affection almost maternal.

Meanwhile, nothing was heard of the Baronet; the shutters of the Priory were still partially closed; the gravel approach to the house was unweeded; and nothing which indicated aught of him remained but his favourite dog, which, like the rest of the household, was said to have become unsociable, and averse to strangers. Constance knew not where to write to him, for in his last letter he had merely said that he was on the eve of a journey, and that he would

write when he possibly could. She was supported under this silence and uncertainty by the thoughts of Emily's arrival; and, on the appointed day, Emily came. Constance had left her a smiling, playful, pretty girl; she found her now almost in womanhood, a tall, but drooping girl of fourteen. As she clasped her in her arms, she felt that she could never part from her again. The ties of infancy, the associations of girlhood, were renewed with double force; and whilst the sisters clung to each other with the fondness of young hearts, even Thomas and Mrs. Mitten could scarcely help being a little moved, a thing almost unheard of in Thomas, whose wooden face had not been known to move a muscle for the last twenty years; and Mrs. Mitten's life had been so totally unruffled, that she hardly knew whether she could shed tears or not. The last time she had cried, as she observed to Thomas, was when Mr. Cattell had spoken a little contrary to her about the airing, or not airing, of his flannel waistcoat. Since then, the sources of her tears had not been called into action.

“I am come in,” said Miss Monckton, whilst

the sisters were at tea, "to see whether you two are like each other ; and I have persuaded this very timid gentleman," producing Mr. Bouverie, "to accompany me."

"Miss Emily is almost as tall as her sister," said Mrs. Cattell, who saw no other difference between them.

"Emily is tired," said Constance, who felt the greatest pride in her sister's delicate loveliness, and was fearful that she did not look her best.

Mr. Bouverie was the only silent observer. He looked with a melancholy pleasure at the younger sister, in whose countenance he saw much resemblance to one whom he considered as unequalled in personal charms. The features were the same, the voices were like, the heights similar ; yet there were, to his mind, some fearful differences between them. The form and face of Constance were rounded by perfect health, her stature seemed natural to her years, her complexion, though varying, was seldom pallid ; her movements, her voice, her attitudes of rest, all indicated natural vigour, and a happily constituted temperament. But Emily,

though moulded in the same beautiful proportion, was as the slender birch, which seems on the verge of being blown away by every violence of the mountain blast. Her cheek had bloom on it, but it was of that vivid, yet delicate hue, which is too often the harbinger of an early doom. Her eyes, usually soft and languishing, were oftentimes lighted by a fire that augured a fearful excitement of her nervous system; her throat and neck were of the purest white; her hands, which might have been a model for a sculptor, seemed almost transparent in their delicacy. Her nature was evidently less buoyant than that of Constance; her mind, as well as body, less calculated to bear the "rude breath" of the world's vicissitudes. Yet there dwelt upon her beautiful brow, and in the speaking compression of her lips, the "high expression of a mind" gifted with reflection beyond the common measure allowed to woman, or even (whatever the usurpers of pre-eminence in the creation may say) to mankind, among the ordinary run of mortals.

"Would they not form a pretty picture?" said Miss Monckton aside to Mr. Bouverie.

“ I wish we had Sir Charles Marchmont’s friend, the portrait painter at Bath, here.”

Mr. Bouverie started at the name of Sir Charles Marchmont, and his eyes met those of Constance. They both coloured deeply.

“ Where is Sir Charles now?” asked Mrs. Cattell.

“ I do not know,” replied Mr. Bouverie.

“ I suppose he’ll not come down to the Priory again,” interposed Mr. Cattell. “ Tidmas tells me it will be put up to auction.”

“ What ! is his mother dead, then?” asked Miss Monckton.

“ I believe not,” said Mr. Bouverie. “ It is probably the timber only that Mr. Cattell means.”

“ And will he have the heart to cut down those fine old chesnut trees?” returned Miss Monckton.

“ I am not at all conversant with Sir Charles’s affairs,” said Mr. Bouverie; “ but it is said that he never means to revisit the Priory.”

“ That is like one of Lady Dartmore’s reports, and I do not believe it,” cried Miss

Monckton, who saw that Constance could scarcely repress her feelings.

“It was from Lady Dartmore that I heard it, and she *said* it came from Miss Herbert. I heard nothing more; for be assured that, under any circumstances, Lady Dartmore is not a person with whom I should like to converse much, and our acquaintance is a very recent one.”

“Poor Sir Robert,” said Miss Monckton, “did not stay very long at Bath. He was frightened at the price of provisions. And as for Lady Dartmore, when my poor friend Mr. Kilderby went to call upon her, she thought he wanted her to subscribe to one of his books, and literally desired him to walk out of her house.”

Mr. Bouverie made no comments upon this little piece of scandal, for he never lent himself to such themes; besides, he was painfully engrossed by the evident dejection of Constance since Sir Charles had been mentioned. He could hardly trust himself to speak to her, with so much commiseration did her sadness inspire him. The sentiments which he entertained for her were of the most disinterested nature, for he had long since relinquished all

hopes of gaining her affections; yet he felt that he would risk every thing but his own peace of conscience to protect her from misery and wrong, and to warn her against the dangers which he feared were assailing her.

The evening was unusually warm, and as Emily had not travelled far that day, a walk was proposed by Miss Monckton. Mr. Bouverie, pleading some engagement, was about to withdraw, but catching a pleading glance from Constance, he instantly changed his resolution, for he was not so much in the extremity of despair, as not to be too ready to deceive himself. Alas! it was in the hope of gleaning something more about Sir Charles, that that look was given.

“Where shall we go?” asked he.

“For my part,” said Miss Monckton, “if those fine chesnuts are to be cut down, I should like to look at them, as often as I can, so let us journey towards the Priory Park.”

Thither they went, a broad overshadowed road, passing through the centre of the park, affording them the opportunity of walking all together, when a sudden fancy seized Miss Monckton.

“ Long as I have lived in Newberry,” said she, “ I never saw the inside of the Priory yet, and since ’tis likely to be shut up, I shall like to explore it. Mr. Bouverie, you are well known there, and can speak a word or two for us to the housekeeper. Come along, Miss Emily, young ladies like you, are always romantic ; and if you are not, Constance is, and will like dearly to lose herself in this old haunted house.”

She turned off, quick as lightning, to a road, which diverging from the public path, led to the house. A spacious gravelled court, announced the front of the dwelling. To the back, were the pleasure-grounds, now tangled and in disorder, but screened from general observation of those who passed through the Park, by thick wood, a circumstance on which Sir Charles Marchmont was wont to congratulate himself, for he was not, from the improvidence and extravagance of his parents, able to keep up the melancholy old place in the order which, with all the feelings of a country gentleman, he could have wished. They rang for some time at a decayed looking door, before the old housekeeper appeared.

“ Good L^ord !” said the old woman, “ I thought it might be Sir Charles come back, instead of this sight of ladies. What may be your pleasure? Mr. Bouverie, may be, you can tell me whether my young master’s dead or drowned, or whether he’s only gone across the water with his cousin—he was always a rackle-headed youth,” continued the old woman, as she took the spectacles from her eyes, “ but I did not think he would have left me here these four months, without a living soul to speak to but the dog and the boy. Though there be plenty of dumb animals in this house—nobody need gainsay that—a sight of rats at night, miss, and crickets enough to sing a psalm. I am right glad to see you, Mr. Bouverie, and will show these ladies over to the best of my power, for I don’t truly know all the rooms, and dark passages in this house myself. There’s a sight of rooms shut up—that was a sight at least, when they were open—and I should not like to be the one to open them. But as for the state-rooms, ladies, the furniture’s all in packages—Sir Charles ordered it so, for he said he did not like to shew his poverty, and the damasks are

all worn out, and the fringes tattered, and what not. But he need not be so particular, for there's many a great man's house, both here and in London, that doesn't look as if it had been furnished for these hundred year." And thus she ran on.

"Tell us the history of some of these pictures," said Mr. Bouverie, as they entered a spacious hall, richly pannelled with carved oaken pannels, once highly polished, but now evincing some tokens of damp, and of the devastations of insects.

"These here figurantes," said the old lady, "were once in the long gallery, to the west, yonder; but the gallery is decayed, and out of the way, and is now, indeed, a lumber room. So Sir Charles would have these here folk brought into the hall, for he said he had nothing now scarcely, but his ancestors to show, and a mighty deal of trouble it was—it's a sad pity and bother, in my notion, for a man to have such a heap o' ancestors. They ha'n't done nothing for him. But, bless your soul, he's as proud of his ancestors, as if they were living. You may well look grave, reverend sir," con-

tinued the talkative old body, looking at Mr. Bouverie, and mistaking the air of deepened seriousness upon his face, to arise from her observations—"for what, as you will say, have some of his ancestors done for him?"

But her words were heard only by two of her auditors, for the observation of Mr. Bouverie was directed to the intense interest with which Constance was regarding a portrait of Sir Charles, in his hunting dress, painted when he was a youth of sixteen.

"Who is this pretty lady?" inquired Emily, pointing to the picture of a young and fair-haired girl, with a blue scarf round her neck, and a jewel on her brow, and a nosegay in her hand, and looking the emblem of youth and happiness—a laughing landscape in the background, and a lamb at her feet. The manner and period were of the Sir Peter Lely school, but were not those of that too highly celebrated individual.

"Did ye never hear of fair Margaret of Marchmont, miss?" said the housekeeper. "Her tomb is in yon church, as fine and gay as may be. Ay, it's a sad story, but a true one, and 'twill make your blood run cold if I tell it."

“ Do let us hear it,” cried Emily, “ for I like these old tales, true or false.”

“ She was the lady, miss,” whispered the old woman, “ who walked out of her grave, and eat part of her own arm.”

“ Nonsense !” exclaimed Miss Monckton.

“ ’Tis true, madam ; Parson Bouverie can vouch for it on his Bible book.”

“ There is a tradition,” said Mr. Bouverie, “ of which this hapless young lady is the subject : and it was currently believed by her family, that when, in the bloom of life, she was attacked by the plague, then prevalent in England, she was buried in a trance, or probably a crisis of the disease. Some days after her funeral, her brother,” (pointing to a portrait of a young officer,) “ died, and the family vault was re-opened to deposit his remains there ; when, to the inexpressible horror of the assistants, they found the body of Margaret on the steps of the vault, with part of her arm eaten away, probably by rats, those invaders of every species of inanimate matter. ” *

* A tradition of this kind is attached to a portrait in Clopton Hall, Warwickshire.

“ There, miss, it must be true, since the Parson says it,” cried the old woman impatiently ; “ but let us on to the state-rooms, for ’tis growing dusk.—Good Lord !” she continued, looking round, “ one of our party has escaped already.”

Constance had, indeed, fled from her companions, unable to controul her desire to view unnoticed a place so interesting to her, and to indulge in the melancholy which that place inspired.

“ And is he then so poor,” thought she, “ yet so disinterested as to prefer poor Constance, with her scanty portion, to the rich and great Miss Herbert ? O that I could but see him—tell him how little I shall think of privations, or any thing except his honour, in being united to him ! It is now explained to me why he generously hesitated before urging me to unite myself with a man of ruined fortunes.”

Full of these reflections, she passed through many a long passage ; opened some doors, but saw that the rooms were dark and empty, tried to open others, but found them closed ; descended, and ascended stairs, and at last arrived

at the only habitable part of the building, apparently ; this was Sir Charles's library, a comfortable apartment, evidently furnished long since the rest of the mansion, and maintained with that good taste, and gentlemanly precision, which might have been expected from his habits and character. There was every thing just as he had left it, when he had last quitted the Priory. An open volume of Burns ; an unfinished drawing ; some hasty directions to his Marchmont steward, which had never been sent, or called for ;—a little fire burning in the grate, for the attached old housekeeper flattered herself daily of his return — an easy chair placed by it, just as he was wont to repose—gave the apartment the air of having been recently occupied : his gun was placed in the corner, and a large, straw garden-hat lay on the table. But that which interested Constance most, was a beautiful picture of Sir Charles's mother, in the bloom of her youth and innocence, and bearing a strong resemblance to himself.

“ He said he could not cease to love her,” thought Constance, “ and yet how deep an injury she inflicted upon him ! How could she

leave him?—Leave him to a profligate father, to cold relations, to mercenaries?”

She looked at it till the sweet and speaking portrait seemed almost to smile upon her.

The room, its unimportant, but, to her, expressive objects, reminding her so forcibly of his former presence,—the thought that he might never return there again, the recollection of her past happiness, the uncertainty of the future, love, compassion, anxiety for the object of her attachment, affected Constance with those varied and conflicting emotions which those who visit scenes once occupied by the beloved, and the absent, sometimes find to be with difficulty repressed. Thus it was with her. She leaned her head upon the writing-desk which Sir Charles was wont to use, and gave vent to her anguish in bitter tears. After a few moments’ indulgence of sorrow, footsteps aroused her from her posture: she turned round, and saw Mr. Bouverie. He stopped short, for the sight of her affliction overcame him. Alas! too well he divined its cause. After a few moments of hesitation, he approached, and said,

“ Miss Courtenay, if by advice, or other as-

sistance, I can alleviate your evident distress, will you command my services? You once regretted to me that you had not a brother; if I can in any way supply the place of so near a relation——”

But here his voice seemed impeded by some sudden and overpowering feeling.

“I have no need of counsel,” replied Constance, hastily drying her tears, for she remembered her promise to Sir Charles; “I am grateful for sympathy, but I wish no one to sympathize with me; I want only—to be unobserved.”

“Perhaps the meeting with your sister has overcome you,” said Mr. Bouverie, with intuitive delicacy, wishing to suggest some plea for her dejection. “Although your first interview may be agitating, her society will, I am sure, be a solace to you—in future,” he added, with an accent of sorrow upon the last words. Constance looked at him with earnest enquiry in her countenance.

“He knows all, and more than I do,” thought she; “there is some obstacle to Sir Charles’s wishes of which his friend is aware.” How

much she longed, at this moment, for her nature was a most confiding one, to throw herself upon his honour, and to accept Mr. Bouverie's counsels—yet her promise to Sir Charles restrained her.

“The evening is drawing to a close,” said Mr. Bouverie, after a few minutes' anxious pause. “Have you seen enough of this old house; and will you allow me to conduct you to Miss Monckton and your sister? They are walking in the gardens: they bade me seek you, otherwise I would not have presumed to have interrupted your solitary investigations of this ancient building.” He drew her arm gently within his, and led her away from the scene of her distress. Constance threw a lingering look as she quitted the library, and felt almost as if she had taken a last farewell of Sir Charles Marchmont, when she left his apartment. In an adjacent lobby they encountered the old housekeeper.

“Why, we thought we had lost you, pretty bird,” said she to Constance; “and so you were found in Sir Charles's room at last. Well, I shall tell my young master what a fine young lady hid herself in his study, and how she was fetched

out by a young parson. He would have no objection to see a sweet young lady there a little oftener when he's at home, for he's mighty lonesome sometimes, and he was always a great admirer of the ladies, like his father before him. And what's this Miss Herbert like, that he's going to marry?" said she, looking sharply through her spectacles at Mr. Bouverie; "they say she's ill-favoured and proud; but she will have money enough to make a plain face look handsome, I reckon. She will be the first rich Lady Marchmont that has been seen for this many a year—hey?"

"Wait till she is Lady Marchmont, before you recount her merits," answered Mr. Bouverie; and wishing the old lady good-night, he moved hastily away.

"There goes as sure a pair of lovers, as if their bans had been called," said Mrs. Dorcas to herself, as she locked the door after them, and retreated to her own room at the extremity of the building, through which the shutting and bolting of her door resounded with many an echo.

"This will be a pretty story for Sir Charles,

to hear how his friend, the grave parson, has gone off with the prettiest girl that I have set eyes on for many a day. Nay, I don't know that ever I see a prettier, let alone Lady Marchmont in her best days—and few were like her then.” And thus, with many a recollection of the absent, and the dead, the old woman sat down to her solitary supper.

Meanwhile, Constance and Mr. Bouverie walked out upon the ample lawn which extended behind the house. The moon was rising, revealing some of the most prominent features in the landscape, whilst the lesser ones were thrown into deep gloom. The fluttering aspen, too fit an emblem of the unsteadiness of worldly friendships, trembled in the gentle evening breeze, which scarcely moved the delicate tops of the fair acacia. The gueldre-rose, throwing its light globes upon the dark mass of foliage, like froth upon the mountain torrent, revealed the depth of shade behind it. The broken statues, which once decorated a scene of gaiety and pride, were touched with gleams of the richest tint, elucidating somewhat of their beauty, but disclosing not the decay and ruin

which seemed to attend every object connected with this old residence. Constance could not resist the temptation of stooping to pluck a rose, which grew luxuriant and neglected near a projecting gable of the Priory. She was unable to detach it, until, shaken with her grasp, its petals fell to the ground. She stood for a moment with the naked stem in her hand, irresolute whether to make a second attempt. It seemed almost emblematical of the destruction of her hopes.

“Will you have this rose-bud?” said Mr. Bouverie timidly, presenting her with another; “it is the emblem of hope.”

“Then it is not for me,” replied Constance, sighing; yet she took the flower.

“What!” returned her companion; “can the Christian ever cease to hope—are we to speak of God’s mercy and providence in hours of tranquillity, and to discard them from our recollection when days of trial come? To hope for better days, to submit to those evils of which we are aware, not to question too sedulously the future, are difficult but necessary acts of self-control. In the very effort to sub-

mit, the mind is tranquillized. The wound may be deep, but it will not rankle, it will not ultimately destroy our happiness, if we abide its healing with patient endurance. But this is a species of discourse perhaps wearisome to you, yet I am excused from troubling you with these remarks by the prevalent practice of all mental and bodily physicians—that of recommending to others the remedies of which they have themselves experienced the necessity, and which they hope may prove efficacious to themselves. We all,” he continued, with a strong emphasis, “require, alas ! these remedies.”

Constance was silent, for she feared that she had already shown too much of her feelings, and dreaded betraying them further ; yet too ingenuous to endeavour to mislead Mr. Bouverie, she kept a strict, and, as it seemed to him, an unkind silence, until she joined Miss Monckton and Emily.

CHAPTER III.

Confessor.

Son !

Speech is not always words ; the parted lips,
Dropping accented sounds most eloquent,
Utter not language such as the dumb eye,
And apprehensive glance, give meaning to :
Like Heaven's stars, soundless, the maiden's eyes
Proclaim the inmost movements of her soul :—

Anselmo. Her's is an angel's presence!—tell me, then,
Is there no hope?

Confessor. None—vows are registered
In heaven. MSS. DRAMA.

IT was about a week after the incidents just related that Mistress Dorcas, of the Priory, was roused out of her first slumbers by the ringing of the door bell, and the barking of the dog. At first the good lady thought it was the mulled wine which had got into her head, and that it was only a dream.

"I have had this vision three nights,"

thought she; “sure enough we shall have some tidings of my young master.”

She turned—no trifling operation to her corpulent frame—again upon her pillow, and resigned herself to the luxury of an incipient slumber. But, in a few minutes, Enoch, a little boy whom she kept at the Priory to be sent upon errands—scolded, buffeted, taught, disciplined, and ill-used in every possible way—came knocking at her door.

“What are you there for, you silly child? get along with you, and don’t come telling me of the bogles and bug-a-boos, as ye do every now and then. Go to your bed, or you shall go without your breakfast to-morrow, you little fool.”

“Mistress!” squeaked the boy, (who, as Sir Charles used to say, saved him an apothecary’s bill by giving Dorcas an object whereupon to vent all her ill-humours,) “Mistress, I come to tell you as how our young maister’s come home.”

“Our young master, indeed! And what durst you call him *your* young master for? So he’s come at last, after keeping me pent up ever so long in this rat-house. Now he’ll be

full of his jeers and jokes at having me down to wait upon him in my night-cap. God bless his soul !”

Meantime, whilst she bustled out of bed, Sir Charles had found his way to his own sitting-room.

“ What ! and is she gone to bed already, Enoch ? Why, it is not ten o’clock. Happy those who can sleep ten hours,” he said with a sigh, as he threw himself into his easy chair.

Sir Charles was followed into his library by Mr. Spencer, his valet, or, as his master, in moments of mirth, used to call him, “ servant extraordinary to the Marchmont family.” He was a person of no small reputation and importance in his own eyes, and even in those of Mrs. Dorcas, who hated and honoured him in the same moment, and with whom he led a sad life, although they generally began a fresh career, after any separation, with remarkable civility to each other.

Mr. Spencer was a man of education, read and wrote his master’s notes, misapplied the little geography he knew, called England Great Brittainy, and told every body that his master’s

house was built in the time of Queen Elizabeth the First ; dabbled even a little in medicine, flattered himself that he was not wholly ignorant of Latin, and availed himself of all his knowledge, which, after all, as Mrs. Dorcas used to say, was “ not a thimble-full,” to become more conceited, prosy, and self-willed, every day of his life. It was his boast that he had grown up with Sir Charles, though, by the way, he was some fifteen years older than the Baronet, whose laughing-stock he had been until familiarity became unseemly, and who had now, for some years, been to him one of those indulgent, negligent, and liberal masters who oftentimes spoil servants, and, according to Mrs. Kilderby, always do so, but who occasionally, to the surprise of all good housekeepers, are better served, and even as much feared, as those meritorious persons who follow Susan every day until she has done sweeping, or ring up John every hour to know what he is about. To close this digression, Mr. Spencer loved his master much, and the more so, that he esteemed himself to be by far the wiser man of the two, and conceived his own precious person to hold

much the same secret influence over the mind of his young master, as the Duke of Buckingham exercised over James I., or the Earl of Bute is said to have maintained over George III.

On the present occasion, Mr. Spencer was more than usually in his altitudes, upon his return home after a long absence, and figured away to Enoch, only regretting, as he passed through the dark and empty rooms, and long passages, that there were so few opportunities of showing off the acquisitions of his travels, and evincing in his own person the benefit of seeing foreign parts. He consoled himself whilst bringing in his master's luggage, with formidable accounts to the large-eyed, red-eared Enoch, of the dangers each package had undergone, and with regrets to Sir Charles that his sapient advice had not been followed on certain occasions, when serious injury to the trunks might, by his wisdom, have been avoided.

“Put them where you like,” said Sir Charles, in answer to one of his valet's numerous questions, and relapsing into thoughts which seemed to be any thing but cheerful.

“But this dressing-box, Sir Charles; the

name on the silver plate, Sir Charles, is quite prefaced ; and there is most ineffectual damage done to the outside."

"Never mind, it will soon wear off."

"That mark, Sir Charles, will never be invalidated," looking at his absent master with a melancholy contempt for his ignorance of, and indifference to, these things.

"Where is Dorcas?—is she asleep? O do not disturb her."

"She is always somniferous at this hour, Sir Charles."

"Very well ; let her sleep till doomsday, if she likes. But if she does awake, tell her I shall be glad to see her."

"Even in her nocturnal habiliments?" asked Spencer ; but receiving no answer, he retreated, saying within himself, "I should not be sorry if she was to sleep all day to-morrow ; for she's the most haggravating woman in England, not saving and excepting France, Germany, and Holland."

"And such is my return to the home of my fathers, and poor Dorcas is the only person that I have to welcome me !" reflected Sir Charles, as

he leaned an aching head and wearied frame against the mantel-piece, little conscious who had stood there last before him. "Am I never to know the blessing of domestic ties? Bereaved of them so early, am I to flounder on in life's temptations, deprived of them altogether? O my mother!" thought he, as he raised his eyes to the portrait of Lady Marchmont, "had it not been for you, I should not have had all this sorrow; yet I will not reproach you—frail, nay guilty though you were," said he aloud, fondly kissing the miniature. "Some extenuations are due to your case, most unhappy parent, and your case may be mine; for you were wedded to a partner whom you loved not."

He wiped from the portrait a tear, which sorrow and pity had extorted even from his manly nature. But the peculiar waddle and shuffle of old Dorcas was now approaching. He turned round to greet her with assumed cheerfulness, conscious from early experience how keen and observant she was of his feelings, and how alive to his childish and his grown-up delinquencies, knowing old Dorcas had often, to his confusion, proved.

“Welcome back to the Priory, Sir Charles,” said old Mrs. Dorcas, who, like most of her sex, appeared to peculiar disadvantage when bustled out of bed, one eye awake and one asleep, looking neither dressed nor undressed, and sideling uncomfortably from the sensation of strings too hastily and tightly tied round a fat stayless body, and a gown gaping wide behind.

“You are quite young and hearty, Dorcas,” said Sir Charles, scarcely knowing what he uttered; “and I am quite pleased to see you again. Has Mr. Wilson, from Marchmont, been here?”

“Good Lord, Sir Charles! why, yes. He was here one day, just as I was stepped out into the town to get some things to redd up the house with, and that stupid, careless, good-for-nothing boy, Enoch——”

“Well, well, never mind; don’t scold Enoch, or Elisha, or whatever his name is. I can write to Wilson. Has any one else been here? Well, but I suppose you thought me lost.”

“Nay, but I could not think your honour would be so shabby as to go down to the bottom of the sea, and leave me here alone in this

here lonesome place," returned Mistress Dorcas, who, in the joy of seeing her lost sheep, as she called him, home again, was thawing fast into good humour.

"Why, it would have been too bad," replied Sir Charles.

"Not to say we have been altogether without visitors," said Mrs. Dorcas: there have been two of the properest young ladies here the other night that ever I set eyes upon, and they vastly admired the house. Miss Monckton was along with 'em, and one young miss fell in love with your honour's room, but then it was when a handsome young parson was in it."

"What do you mean?" cried Sir Charles, his face reddening.

"Only I mean, Sir Charles, that your honour's partic'lar friend, Mr. Bouverie, is courting of a young lady as lives at Mr. Cattell's. All the town says it, and I caught them here together."

"Is it possible," thought Sir Charles, "that Bouverie——;" but he discarded the base suspicion from his mind.

"And after they had gone out," pursued

Mrs. Dorcas, "I peeped through the lobby window, and seed them giving each other flowers, and she tooked a flower from him so pretty, and the moon shined so bright, but perhaps it was all moonshine, as Mr. Spencer says. Your honour's tired of my talking. What would you please to have for supper, Sir Charles?"

"O, nothing. When were they here, Dorcas?"

"It was yesterday come a week; I know by my washing, for I had been clear-starching my best necks, and the night was fine for drying, and——"

"I will dispense with those particulars, and how—how did the lovers look—very happy?"

"Why, not altogether; it couldn't be expected, for I never knew match-making a merry business. It matters not whether a young lady says yes or no, 'tis ever a crying business. But this young creature laughed and shed tears in the same breath; and when that is the case, you may always guess the consequences. Won't you eat a bit of pigeon-pie, Sir Charles?"

“No, thank ye, Dorcas; you may go to bed.”

“I have been seeing to them bed-hangings and counterpanes, or I should have been in preparation of something to your fancy. But what say you to a broiled chicken, or a poached egg?”

“Begone, good Dorcas, if you do not wish to make me ill. There is wine here, and that is the best panacea for an aching head—and a heavy heart,” said he, as he heard her close the door.

He sat down by the fire, and filled out a bumper.

“And it is ever so with her,” thought he, as he pursued the train of his own reflections. “Constance—dear Constance! joy and sadness succeed each other rapidly on that varying countenance. I know not how, with all your sensibility to both impressions, you will withstand the pangs which *must* be inflicted.—But though I may resign her, she shall not be torn from me by another,” said he, starting up, and beginning to pace the room, an action always indicative of the crisis of a man’s vexations. “I may relinquish her affec-

tions, but they shall not insidiously be taken from me by one who calls himself my friend—by a friend who must guess my attachment, and who knows, too, the obstacles which ought to have prevented its avowal. I may, however, be wrong; I will prove him guilty before I condemn him; and when I part from Constance, it shall not be as a discarded lover,” he continued, as he resumed again and again his perambulations.

It was soon rumoured in Newberry, that the Priory was once more tenanted by its almost idolized master. Mrs. Crawford had seen Enoch go down the street, and when she stopped him through her window, after sundry jesuitical inquiries from the widow, he acknowledged that he was sent into town by Sir Charles, who had come home. Mrs. Crawford transmitted the news to Miss Pearson, who went breathless with it to Mrs. De Courcy. Constance was at her easel, when Mrs. Cattell announced the intelligence. The pencil fell from her hand, and she hastened to her friend Miss Monckton, to pour into her kind bosom the emotions which oppressed her own. She ran into the room, and

there beheld no one, except Sir Charles. The ecstasy with which she flew to him, the guileless fondness with which she clung to his arm, dispelled in the young Baronet's mind all thoughts of change, and would have rendered any ordinary lover the happiest of men. But whilst he gazed on her with love surpassing even her own, an expression of sorrow was mingled with the tenderness of his looks and language. To her, all was hope and happiness; but in the object of her youthful attachment, over-mastering emotions of a different sort seemed at times to rise unbidden. But Sir Charles, from the difficulties of his situation in life, had early become an adept in controuling the expression of his feelings. After a few minutes, he resumed the self-possessed and engaging manner which Constance, in her ignorance of the world, had never then seen equalled. He repelled, with playful fondness, the charges which, half seriously, half laughingly, she brought against him of silence and of absence, and told her that he had been travelling abroad.

“Abroad! and are there no posts abroad?” asked she. “One line, to have said that you

were well and constant, would have been consolatory. But you are home again, and I am too happy to reproach you; although I fear Miss Monckton will accuse me of not keeping up my dignity."

"I hope you are quite well, Sir Charles, after your travels," said the good old maid, who now entered, with a strong accent upon the last word.

"I am like Goldsmith's Traveller—I have dragged at each remove a lengthened chain," replied the Baronet, placing her a chair.

"I should be happy to hear it; but that I fear it is the chain merely that has drawn you back," rejoined Miss Monckton. "I never like travelling lovers."

"But where duty intervenes," urged Sir Charles.

"What duty can compel a man to secrecy towards his mistress and his friend? I never was a friend to mysteries. If sin or sorrow overtake you, depend on it the good Catholic doctrine of confession to one individual, at least, is its best remedy. What do you say to it, Constance?"

"I say," answered Constance, raising her

head, which had been lowered during the too just remarks of her friend, "that coinciding warmly in all that you observe, there are yet persons, in whom, with every incentive to suspicion, I should confide, and whom I should pity only, for the necessity of so painful a condition as that of concealment."

"Thank you for that generous thought," said Sir Charles; but his acknowledgments wanted the enthusiastic pleasure which a fond and grateful heart would naturally pour forth.

Constance, although her joy was somewhat checked by the recollection of his unexplained absence, was too happy to see him, and hear him speak, to think much of the future. The coming days of her life seemed to be shrouded in mist, and perhaps overhung with clouds, but the present was all sunshine. She had the gratification of presenting Sir Charles to her sister, her only natural tie in whom she now felt that he had an interest as well as she. A strict concealment of all particular intimacy was agreed on between her and Sir Charles; but they had the luxury of meeting in the evenings around

Miss Monckton's tea-table, and of walking together up and down her garden, which, fortunately for them, had a gravel-walk only wide enough for two persons. Miss Monckton and Emily sat within, for the latter was of an age when the taste for reading is a passion ; and as her elderly friend was never tired of hearing, so was she never tired of reading works modern and ancient, lively and dry, comic and sentimental ; and thus the long, uninterrupted evenings were left unbroken to the lovers.

It was whilst affairs were in this condition, that Mrs. De Courcy gave a party, expressly, as Miss Crawford hinted, to greet the young Baronet on his return, and for Miss Pearson to see how the wind blew with respect to Mr. Bouverie. Of course, all the town were invited, and Mrs. De Courcy was resolved to intermingle cards with dancing, and to invite several of the families in the neighbourhood to join the gay scene. The entertainment went off much in the same manner as such entertainments usually do. Many were mortified, most people were tired, some lost at cards, some won, but it is questionable whether any, except purblind Mrs.

Sparrow, (who played at whist every night in the year, Sundays excepted, when she slept,) and one or two young ladies of fifteen, really enjoyed it. Constance was happy, during the early part of the evening—happy in being in the same room with Sir Charles, happy in looking at Emily, whose youthfulness and simplicity attracted universal admiration, as well as her beauty: for, both extreme youth, and matronly charms are usually commended by the generality of the fair sex, who deem either attribute a safeguard against competition. Constance, however, felt a little lonely, for Sir Charles, as was arranged previously, forbore all marked public attention, and Mr. Bouverie obviously avoided her; and she was also surprised at the altered manner in which the two friends met, Sir Charles almost haughtily, and Mr. Bouverie gravely, paying the formal tribute of a recognition which appeared to be the first that had passed between them since Sir Charles's return. Constance declined dancing at first, and sat with Emily, looking, with feelings better imagined than described, at the dance, in which Sir Charles led off the animated Mrs. De

Courcy. Miss Monckton was much engaged in conversing with a thick-set young man, with a head of hair somewhat resembling that domestic instrument vulgarly called a Turk's head. He spoke in a monotonous, thick voice almost incessantly, and he and Miss Monckton seemed to be contradicting each other as fast as they could. At last she heard Miss Monckton say to him,

“ Will you dance ? ”

“ I have no great objection,” was his reply ; “ but I see no one that I much mind about dancing with ; the room is small, and the dancers numerous ; I think it is the kindest thing to stand still.”

“ By no means. Miss Courtenay, allow me to introduce you to Mr. Manvers ; and pray,” she whispered, “ take compassion on him, for he knows no one here.”

Preliminaries being settled, Constance said that she would rather wait until her sister had a partner, and then they could stand together ; and as she secretly guessed that the unknown gentleman was a Scotchman, perhaps he might

like a reel. In the very nick of time stepped forwards Mr. James Tribe, resolved to secure the hand of one of the Miss Courtenays ; for he always selected the prettiest girls in the room, and to-night he thought himself looking particularly attractive. He drew on a pair of light yellow gloves successfully, remarking to Emily, as he led her to the dance, and meaning to say something particularly genteel, "that it did not do to dance without gloves now-a-days." The company were mostly fatigued by one of those long black-looking country dances, which benevolently comprised within its limits the old and the childish, indeed, every one who had a leg to stand on. There were consequently only eight persons who chose to join in the reel which was now struck up, and among these were two of the Miss Tribes, who were ready for every thing. They were heated and disarranged by their exertions in the country dances, in which Miss Hester's hair had come down, and Dora's gown had been twice pinned ; but nevertheless they came merrily up to a fresh attack. Constance was grieved that Emily

should make her *debüt* with the “man of figure,” recollecting her own sufferings on several occasions.

“Never mind, Emily; I danced with him the very first time that——” whispered she to her sister; but in the midst of her consolations they were led off to the dance.

At first, they did not get on very well, and it was found necessary to train the man of figure a little. He always set when he should have turned his partner, and when he did perform the proper evolutions, was sure to come with a violent thump against some one or other. Constance was disappointed, too, in her partner, as she expected the hilarity which North Britons feel at the cadence of a jig, to be displayed even in his clumsy person; but Mr. Manvers moved heavily and systematically through the dance, with as laborious an air as if he had been working at the tread-mill, and Constance could not detect even the outline of a fling in his movements. Yet as

“Upon his speech there hung,
The accents of a northern tongue,”

she still believed him to be a Scotchman, more

especially, as at their outset, he had begged her not to "stand upon the door." After some embarrassments, the two sisters got into the true spirit of the dance; and Constance, stimulated by a glance from Sir Charles, and gay in her unconsciousness of coming evils, danced with a vivacity and buoyancy which she perhaps never afterwards experienced to the same extent. Her habitual grace, heightening as it did her now almost matured beauty, was the more admirable, as it was devoid of that thought of self, and consciousness of admiration, which so much lessen the attractions even of the loveliest. She was almost wholly occupied in thinking, with pride, how much Emily must be admired; and the transient smile, the affectionate glance between the sisters, as they passed and re-passed, showed how mutual was this feeling. The accomplishments of Emily were fresh from London tuition, yet it was much to say that instruction had not done too much for her. If she danced with more precision and care than Constance, she had yet too much good taste to allow art to be too conspicuous in that exercise, which is most graceful when it appears to proceed from

the inspiration of natural, but not vulgar gaiety. Her slender feet moved with the elasticity which youth, and youth only, can give; whilst the exertion bestowed such bloom upon her delicate complexion, that many persons pronounced her to be handsomer than her sister. All who were assembled were intent upon the movements of the sisters; and disinterested observers, among which select few we must place mothers without daughters, engaged persons, and *hopeless* old maids, were loud in their exclamations of praise. Nor was it thrown away on Miss Pearson; that Mr. Bouverie sat retired from others, and never took his eyes off Miss Courtenay until she had done dancing.

“This has been a true Scotch reel,” said Constance to her partner, as he was leading her to a seat.

“Oh! reels are quite vulgar in Scotland,” replied he, without turning his head round.

They passed Sir Charles Marchmont; and Constance, to her surprise, observed that her Caledonian friend knew Sir Charles, to whom he gave a slight nod of his head, which was

answered by a very distant and very haughty bow from the Baronet.

“That’s as proud a man as lives,” observed Mr. Manvers, as he squeezed himself by Constance at the extremity of a form palisaded with ladies.

“Who—Sir Charles Marchmont? Do you know him?” said Constance.

“Every body knows him—it is no honour to be known by him at all.”

“He’s very disagreeable, this Scotch gentleman,” thought Constance; “I wish he were back again over the border.”

“People cherish the pride of that man so much, but he’ll be humbled enough some day, poor feckless body,” said Mr. Manvers, who seemed to entertain that low, virulent dislike to Sir Charles, which vulgar people often harbour towards those whom they repute to be somewhat genteeler than themselves. “I was at school with him.”

“Were you, indeed!” said Constance, all astonishment to think that the same seminary could turn out the elegant Sir Charles, and the coarse, rude person who sat beside her.

“Yes; and now he won’t speak to me.”

“That ’s too bad, indeed,” replied Constance, not at all wondering in her own mind, but acknowledging to herself that she thought Sir Charles had lately become rather proud.

“Were you in school in England, sir?” inquired she, wishing to prolong a subject ever interesting to her.

“O yes; but I ’ve been to Glasgow since. My father is from East Lothian, but I am an Englishman, born in Cheshire; and I am now with a friend, Mr. Tidmas, in this town, living with him for a week.”

“Indeed!” said Constance, not much interested in any point about him but one. “I hope you like Newberry.”

“Not at all; I think it a stupid, narrow-minded place—the people here are confoundedly high.”

“I have not found it so,” replied Miss Courtenay. “But then,” thought she to herself, “I have not visited Mr. Tidmas.”

“They are going to supper—will you come?” said Mr. Manvers; and Constance,

though pining to get rid of him, went, in hopes of rejoining her sister.

“There’s the Baronet again,” said the stranger, as they passed Sir Charles, who eagerly whispered to Constance, in a tone of irritation, as she passed him, “Constance, do you know with whom you have been dancing?”

“No, indeed.”

“With the son of Lord Vallefors’s steward. When will you be released? I shall follow you to the supper room.”

“Do,” replied Constance, as she was dragged away by the heavy hulk to which she was attached, as a little boat is linked to a lugger.

“Do you know much of Sir Charles?” inquired her partner, in the same sullen, dissatisfied tone as that in which every sentence that he uttered was conveyed.

“I have known him some time,” replied Constance, who, however the fashionable doctrine of expediency might have justified her, was not yet an adept in convenient subterfuges.

“So—you’ll see that man humbled before you are much older.”

“How? I know he is poor.”

“But you don’t perhaps know that he is—illegitimate,” in a voice intended to be low, but proving only hoarse.

“Neither do I believe it,” said Constance, firmly.

“What! did you never hear the story of his mother, fair lady?”

“I have heard reports which I deem not of a nature even to allude to, and perhaps here it will be better that this conversation should end.”

“Well, then, suppose we finish it by taking a glass of wine together,” said Mr. Manvers, whose manners can only be described by observing that he seemed to choose the most disagreeable way of expressing even that which he meant for civility. “And so you stand up for Sir Charles? Perhaps you can tell me,” said he, as he helped her to some fruit, “whether he does, or does not, mean to marry his cousin.”

“How can I know that?” said Constance, turning very pale; “I never supposed him to have been engaged to her.”

“Then you cannot know much about him, for he has been engaged to her since he was of age. My family and Lord Vallefors’s are well acquainted. You don’t seem to like those grapes; can I help you to any thing else?”

“If you will take me to Miss Monckton, I shall be obliged to you,” answered Constance, scarcely able to articulate; but at this moment her arm was gently touched by Sir Charles.

“O, do take me away,” she cried, “home; I wish to go home, if you please, immediately.”

“Miss Courtenay is ill,” observed Mrs. Crawford to Mr. Bouverie; “had you not better offer some of your spiritual advice to her? It seems to be the mind, rather than the body, which is diseased.”

“I hope not,” replied Mr. Bouverie, with assumed calmness, yet moving hastily into the little ante-room, whither he saw Constance conveyed, supported by Sir Charles and one or two ladies. They would have placed her on a sofa, for the anguish as well as the paleness of death was on her countenance; but she had still strength and resolution enough to gather her shawl around her, and to beg to go home. A sedan chair

was in waiting, in which she was instantly put, and in which she begged the servant to order that she might be conveyed to Miss Monckton's. When she arrived at the house of her friend, she found, as she could not but expect, Sir Charles waiting on the steps to receive her. Revived, however, by the air, she had regained sufficient energy of mind and body to refuse the assistance which he tenderly urged, and to resist the impassioned solicitations of that voice which she had never thought to hear in vain. He followed her, however, into the house, and stood in mute amazement as he beheld her sink into the first chair that met her sight, and, leaning over it, avert her face from him.

“Constance, dearest Constance! what have I done to merit this displeasure?” inquired the Baronet, thinking that it was some indulgence of feminine caprice which now called forth her anger. But she was silent.

“How can I appease you?” said he, in a more lively tone. “Alas! you know your power too well! But tell me what has angered that kind heart? I will submit even to tyranny from you, only instruct me how I am to please

you in the capacity of a slave? What! no reply? Nay, Constance, this is too serious a joke. You may probe the heart that loves you too severely," continued Sir Charles, the colour rising to his face. "To-morrow, perhaps, this sullen fit may cease, and then Constance will be herself again. Good night." He extended his hand, which, to his surprise, she did not reject.

"Perhaps, Constance, you are really not well," said he, kissing with fondness the hand which remained passively in his. "I am too apt to consider a lady's ailments as little ebullitions of temper, or as jealousy, suspicion, or mortified vanity. Tell me, is it so?"

"Miss Monckton will tell you to-morrow all about it," replied Constance, in a tone so full of wretchedness, that Sir Charles instantly glanced at the truth. Conscious of what she might hear, what she had heard came immediately to his recollection. He grasped the hand which he held still more firmly, and was on the point of giving vent to a burst of passion, when the reflection that he might yet be mistaken, that he might be committing himself

needlessly, prevented him from giving in to a confession, which would, he justly expected, ruin for ever his prospects in regard to Constance. Nature had made him impetuous and ingenuous—the world had not controlled the violence of his feelings; it had taught him only to conceal them. With the caution of a man of the world, he replied, therefore—“ And can you not spare Miss Monckton the trouble of telling me any thing disagreeable to-morrow, by letting me know it to-night? I would rather receive condemnation from your lips than a blessing from her’s.”

“ It is what Mr. Manvers told me,” said Constance, wringing her hands; “ and O! if I could but think it was untrue, you would never have occasion to reproach me with coldness or sullenness: but I cannot, I will not attach myself to a man who has deceived me.—You found me happy,” pursued she, perceiving that Sir Charles hid his face in his hands without answering; “ why did you seek my misery? why did you pursue me with a passion, begun, indeed, in thoughtlessness, but ending in grief and disgrace? Do you think that I would ac-

cept the hand which has been solemnly affianced to another? would my affections recompense me for the loss of your honour, the departure of your self-esteem, the condemnation of all good people? Alas! now is all the mystery explained—explained to this, that we must separate for ever.”

“Not whilst I have life, Constance,” said Sir Charles, with a calmness which seemed, as it were, the climax of strong mental excitement. “I can purchase my liberty—it is conditional, and the sacrifice even of my birthright were easy, compared with the union to a woman I dislike; and what is still more, the loss of one——”

“O! do not put me in the scale,” cried Constance indignantly: for she was shocked at this apparently cool contemplation of a breach of a solemn engagement. “The delusion is passed from my eyes. I loved you, under the semblance of honour, of high-mindedness, of all that is generous and good. Dishonoured, I must pity, I fear, regret you, but I will never unite myself to you.”

“But will you hear nothing in extenuation,

Constance?" asked Sir Charles, in a tone almost as indignant as her own.

"*Can* a bad action be extenuated, Sir Charles? But I do not seek to expatiate upon that which is now past remedy ; I merely entreat you, as you value your own peace of mind, as you value, perhaps, my esteem, to do such justice as you can. Your injuries to me you cannot redress, but let them be forgotten, as they are forgiven—but to another person ——"

"And would you, Constance, inflict on me the wretchedness, nay, the temptation of marrying one woman when my heart is devoted to another? Of marrying a woman to whom necessity alone affianced me? True ; you will say, that nothing can excuse a breach of faith, or palliate my not remaining constant ;—no, not constant, for constancy is of the mind and heart, but faithful at least to her, to whom this cursed contract was made. But look at the circumstances. Did that man tell you nothing more of me?"

"He did ; but—but, I did not believe it. And why? Because I could not suppose that you would deceive me on that point, nor on any," said she, with a burst of anguish.

“Nor would I, Constance, had my alleged misfortuné been proved. Perhaps even you will pity me, when I tell you the whole of my sad history. My mother experienced the fate you urge me to; she married, when her affections were another’s. The late Sir Philip Marchmont, my father, often left her, and spent in a foreign capital the means which ought to have rendered him happy and respectable at home. Eventually, my unhappy mother eloped with the object of her first attachment. The case was a lamentable one, and the public commiseration rested not with my father. The penalty of my mother’s sin lay on her, and on me. Can you comprehend me, without my descending into particulars which might tinge the cheek of purity with shame, and writhe me with humiliation and sorrow?”

“I do too well understand, and pity you from my inmost soul,” replied Constance, her tears falling fast as she spoke.

“When I became of age,” continued Sir Charles, “Lord Vallefort, heir-at-law to the Marchmont property, and my father’s cousin, apprized me that doubts existed as to my title,

which he should not press, hoping, that from similarity of age, and, as he thought, of disposition between me and Miss Herbert, an union might be projected which would satisfy his claims through his daughter ; and, at the same time, prevent to me an exposure, which I must say, I dreaded, and which I should still dread, did not stronger motives than selfish fears now actuate me."

"Go on," said Constance, "I am prepared to hear what I already know, that you acceded."

"Can you blame me?" replied Sir Charles. "I loved her not, but I loved no one else. I had always been taught to consider it probable that we should be united, and without reflecting, I acquiesced in what I believed to be my destiny. At the same time, I was aware that Lord Vallefert had, unhappily, but too much reason to suppose that his claims would be admitted ; and the only evidence I could hope to adduce to disprove them, would be that which I might glean at the instigation of my mother, and that of an old servant who accompanied her in her flight to the continent. Will you believe

it, Constance, in telling you all these circumstances my mind is relieved. No one can calculate on the miseries he encounters when he ventures on a career of deception."

"Ah! that is like you," answered Constance, looking at him with enthusiastic tenderness, but quickly casting down her eyes.

"The history of my attachment to you, you can yourself know. Often have I purposed to divulge all to you, and to bid you choose for me between dishonour and the loss of you; but my better resolutions sank beneath a passion so strong, that happen what may, I shall never cease to look to you as the first who awakened in my breast pure and elevated sentiments to woman, and as the first and last object of the only genuine love that I ever felt for any of her sex."

"And it has been sincerely returned," said Constance, weeping.

"When last I parted from you, my dearest Constance, even when I was rash enough to avow for you the sentiments which I imparted to you at Bath, I had hopes that I might find the unfortunate being who gave me birth, and

obtain from her the only reparation that she can now make to her wretched son, that of establishing my birth-right. My search was fruitless, yet I have reason to think that Lady Marchmont still lives, and in this hope, even Bouverie agrees with me."

"Mr. Bouverie! does he know these circumstances?" asked Constance.

"He was the early depositary of all my secrets, previous to the existence of that which I believe, I fear, he suspects. But why so curious about Mr. Bouverie, Constance? Yes, yes, I see the interest which Constance feels for me is not undivided."

Constance shook her head, but otherwise seemed scarcely to notice this remark. She appeared to be deeply engrossed in her own agitating reflections for some moments. Her hands were clasped firmly together, as if indicative of some strong mental contest. Once her eyes were raised to heaven, as if imploring the assistance of that Being who seemed now her only refuge. At length she spoke to Sir Charles, who was watching, in fearful expectation, the working of her countenance, eagerly drinking

in, as it were, the words which fell from her lips.

“ I am thankful,” she began, with a fearful calmness, “that I now know all. I am also thankful that there are so many—so many extenuating circumstances; and now there is only one decision to be made. Nay, do not oppose me, Sir Charles. I know now what have been your struggles; how your infatuation for me has led you from the line of duty—how you have often, I am sure, resolved to return to it again. Since I have been unconsciously the means of leading you astray, let me endeavour, at least, to influence you to do what is right and honourable.” She struggled for utterance as she proceeded—“ I can have no happiness but in your honour, no inclination ever to unite myself to one who breaks his bond to another.”

“ But hear me, Constance, hear me,” said Sir Charles, who at this moment resolved to relinquish every earthly good except her affection; “you may relinquish my vows to you, you may discard me from your presence; but it will make no difference. I have never loved any woman but you, and I never yet

prized any object that I did not attain. Constance! we shall yet be happy; my uncle presses for no immediate conclusion to—to his proposals; my birth shall yet be ascertained; and, Constance, the pride and delight of my heart shall yet shine in a sphere for which nature has formed her.”

He spoke, perhaps, with confidence; but passionately as she to whom he addressed these words loved him, and young and uninitiated into the ways of society as she was, she possessed a mind that could rise superior even to the influence of one so warmly, so purely, yet so vainly beloved, as this object of her first preference.

“And can you,” she said, “add ingratitude to baseness? Remember that Lord Vallefors has spared *you* mortification and suffering; do not implant within so kind a heart the sting of seeing his daughter slighted. In time,” she added, mournfully, “in time you will learn to forget me; and if you ever think of Constance, think of her only as of one to whom the report of your honest fame, the knowledge of your domestic happiness, the hope of your reward hereafter,

will be consolatory, in the desolateness of her own existence; and since we must part, let us part with a good conscience."

She spoke earnestly, and there was a firmness in her manner which left Sir Charles no doubt as to the sincerity of her purpose; yet he well knew his empire over her heart, and still hoped to win her to a neutral course, until his affairs should wear a brighter aspect.

"To-night, dearest Constance," said he, "you are wearied, agitated—to-morrow we will discuss every point, and you shall decide whether you will consent to abide the uncertainty of my fortunes, or render me wretched by driving me from you."

"To-morrow, then," said Constance, with a faltering accent, and placing her hand upon her brow—"Farewell!"

He grasped her hand in his, and asked at what hour he should be permitted to see her.

"Miss Monckton will tell you how I am, and if I am able," replied Constance. "It is now late, pray go," she added, yet allowing still her hand to rest in his; and when the last parting words were said, such was the agony of spirit

that seemed to overwhelm her, that Sir Charles, half suspecting her intention, again and again returned to bid her good night. At length they separated, and some years elapsed before Sir Charles Marchmont and Constance held converse with each other again.

CHAPTER IV.

Oh now, for ever
Farewell the tranquil mind ! farewell content !

OTHELLO.

Truth shall nurse her ;
Holy and heavenly thoughts still counsel her.

HENRY VIII.

MISS MONCKTON was sitting up in her little back parlour, and as Constance opened the door, she saw her sympathizing friend, her face pale with this unwonted vigil, her eyes gleaming with anxiety, on the watch for Sir Charles's departure.

“ I hope,” said she, trying to look cheerful, though she was half asleep, “ that the gossips of Newberry won't hear of this midnight interview. It is, however, arranged that you are to sleep here, under pretext of indisposition, to benefit by my good nursing. Well now, tell me what all this disturbance has been about ?

But bless me, Constance! how cold your hand is! Now I really must know what the matter is."

"I will tell you all about it to-morrow, my dear, my only friend," said Constance, trying to restrain the bitter tears which rushed unbidden into her eyes; "spare me to-night, to-morrow you shall know every thing."

"I will spare you, dear soul," returned Miss Monckton, looking at her with sincere compassion, for the ball attire, the chaplet of white roses which decked her brow, and the ornaments which adorned her fair neck and arms, gave her, cast down as she was by fatigue and despair, the semblance of a victim. "Go to bed, that is the kindest thing I can say to you; and if you want comfort, either corporeal or spiritual, before morning, ring for Sarah, who has stores of camphor or sal volatile, or call me, who have volumes of good advice in this old head to afford you."

"And *if* I want comfort or advice," thought Constance, as she found herself alone in her own room, and gave vent to unrestrained anguish; "and who can want it so much?"

She leaned her face upon her hands, and

long, long rested them upon a table, without the wish or power to lay aside her gala dress, or to retire to bed. At length, after an interval of what could scarcely be considered as thought, she slowly, and heartlessly drew off her habiliments, and with a heavy sigh threw herself down to rest. She could not compose her mind to pray, and, for the first time since her infancy, closed the evening without imploring that aid, without which she knew herself to be a broken reed. She felt that it would be like impiety to offer up the tribute of a heart so rent with conflicting emotions that she could not say, in fervency of spirit, "Thy will be done!" This was her first affliction; that subjection of the feelings, which, in a well-disposed mind, is the result of repeated calamities, was yet to come, and the time was to arrive, when she felt the appeal to God to be her dearest, and instant refuge. The horrors of that night of perplexity and sorrow, those who know what night is to the wretched, may readily imagine. Constance sought not to sleep, for she felt that such a blessing was not for her. The thousand schemes of the restless, the self-accusing

thoughts, the wish that she had acted thus, the regret that she had said *that*, the feverish calculations of the future, the anguished recollection of the past—these miseries have most likely been borne by all of us, and they will readily be acknowledged to exceed far, in poignancy, even the most afflicting events of the most eventful day. At length, as the beams of morning aroused the envied labourer from his repose, Constance fell asleep—a short but deep slumber gave her a respite from her sorrow. She awoke with that oppressive load at her heart, which seemed to have been aggravated by a transitory oblivion. Who does not remember with sadness the first awaking to the recollection of overnight grief? what can exceed renewed consciousness, after long-wished-for slumber, of a child or parent lost, friendship betrayed, or hopes disappointed? And Constance awoke only to remember the destruction of her dearest hopes, and to the conviction that she must herself aid in their annihilation.

For a few minutes she wept, in a paroxysm of agony, without caring to pursue her purpose of the night: but Constance had

energy—and what was more, she had integrity of character. She justly felt her honour to be compromised by continuing to receive the addresses of a man, who had confessed himself engaged to another; she humbly trusted that the blessing of Heaven would rest upon her sincere endeavours to take the right path; and she had such a value for Sir Charles's reputation, such an enthusiastic devotion to the better part of his character, as in pure and generous minds constitutes the strongest link of love's chains, and which, in her's, made her dread his dereliction from an honourable course, far more than her own deprivation in losing him for ever. Strengthened by virtuous anxiety for him, Constance dried her tears, and feeling that there was no time to lose, she resolved to put her intention into execution before she was likely to be unnerved by Miss Monckton's regrets, or still more by the efforts of Sir Charles to see her.

“ I will see him no more, I will see him no more,” she cried, in bitter grief, as she prepared to write him a few hurried lines. She scarcely trusted herself to dwell upon what she

should say; she ventured not to re-peruse the last parting words, but hastily completed her dress, wrapped a large cloak around her, and running down stairs, dispatched Miss Monckton's only male appendage, a footboy of sixteen, with it to the Priory. She then resolved to hasten to the abode of her guardian, where the presence of Mr. and Mrs. Cattell would, she thought, be a sufficient barricado against Sir Charles's visits. She left a message for Miss Monckton, and hurried into the open air.

The haze of morning was still over the pinnacles of Saint Michael's tower, as Constance wended her way towards her home; a few market women—hale, sun-burnt, and looking as if the softer parts of woman's composition had been left out in the ingredients of their frame—alone met her view, before she ascended the huge steps, crossed the chilling, untrodden hall, and found herself in her own apartment. Emily was still asleep, her cheek somewhat flushed with the exertions of the preceding evening, one hand supporting her head, whilst the other, rivalling the linen on which it lay in

whiteness, looked like sculptured marble, so still and so fair was it. Her sister stood for some minutes gazing upon the young and lovely girl with that fondness, with which those who have recently lost one object of affection often turn to another.

“I have Emily,” thought she, “and I must try to forget that I ever had another;” but the gushing tears proved how difficult is the effort to tear asunder ties which she had once fondly cherished.”

“Constance, my dear Constance!” cried Emily, as she awoke, and saw her sister, like an apparition of the night, standing opposite to her; “what has been the matter?”

“Nothing, dear Emily, but that we must now love each other better than ever,” replied Constance, and the sisters were folded in each other’s arms.

Meantime, the messenger whom Constance had dispatched to the Priory, arrived in such good time at that ancient edifice, that its inmates were not prepared to admit any news of the exterior world. The blue smoke, indeed, ascended from a remote corner of the building,

amid the rich tints of adjacent Beeches, and spiral Chesnuts, whose varied hues contrasted finely with the clear, delicious blue of the summer sky. But sky, and trees, and fine contrasts, were all thrown away upon humble Peter, who only wished that he might get back again, to clean his knives. At last, a thin, pointed nosed, pedantic face peered from a window above, saying, in a very measured tone; "Whom do I hail this morning, at this salubrious hour?"

"Please your honour, and Sir Charles, it's I, Peter, as lives with Miss Monckton," replied the youth, "just come up with a letter, Mr. Spencer."

"Will you peruse the document, and tell me for whom it is purposed," answered the man of multifarious offices.

"I cannot read write of-hand, but I knows it's to Sir Charles, from a lady."

"Always in some folly, always in some folly," said Spencer, to himself, and he descended the staircase in dignified condescension. He deigned, however, to take the note, with an air of such supreme conscious importance as

ministers of state may be supposed to assume when conferring with an humble clerk. He read, and re-read the direction, and, as is often the practice of his brethren, inspected the seal, with a cautious glance at the flaps. After this examination, he condescended to shut the door full in the wide-mouthed, gaping face of the messenger, and hastened with the note to his master. To the surprise of Mr. Spencer, who, as Mrs. Dorcas used to say, was wont to rise early in the morning, only to boast of it, Sir Charles answered his gentle tap at the door immediately, and appeared half-dressed.

“When did this note come?” said he, hastily snatching the dispatch from his valet, and without waiting for an answer, shutting the door violently. Mr Spencer, who never performed any part of his menial duties without having prepared some speech to preface, and elevate them, retreated, wondering, however, at his master’s disregard of what he was about to say, and longing to guess at the contents of a billet, which could be snatched with such avidity; for with all his high-sounding, magnanimous epithets, Mr. Spencer was not free from that

curiosity which the march of intellect has not yet been able to dispel from the minds of those who play a subordinate part in the great drama of life. He was aroused from his morning's repast, and from his discussions with worthy Dorcas, who, when she had any news to hear, was tolerably civil to him, by a violent ring of Sir Charles's bell, resounding through the servants' hall with that dolorous, and yet importunate sound, which those instruments of domestic government have in old-fashioned houses.

"I am required, Mistress Dorcas," said Mr. Spencer, never, in his utmost aid, forgetting the air of self-importance which, like the tragic start to a well practised performer had now become habitual to him. "Let Enoch finish the shoes.—It is a pity," added he, with a self-complacent smile, "that I cannot finish my breakfast by deputy." Away went the man of importance, and the next glimpse that Mrs. Dorcas had of him, was as he was holding the hall door wide open for Sir Charles, who ran out into the avenue, and was soon lost to their view.

"Gone out without breakfast, I declare!" cried the housekeeper, all amazement.

“Gone out without breakfast, indeed,” echoed Mr. Spencer, with a face of vast importance, as he entered : even little Enoch held up his hands with wonder.

“My master wants good counsellors,” said Mr. Spencer, significantly.

“He wants a wife,” replied Dorcas sharply. “I wish Miss Herbert would have him, and be quick over it, and then we should have old days back again at the Priory.”

“And I,” said Spencer, with an attempt at a smile, “might be house-steward.”

“And I,” said Enoch, “should be a postilion, at least I mean to try for it.”

Mean time Sir Charles had hurried to Miss Monckton, had surprised the good lady in her dressing-gown ; but even in that familiar guise, found his former friend inexorable.

“I know not her reasons,” said the spinster, “but I am convinced from what you hint, that she has written to you, that she can show good cause for not seeing you ; and, till I know what it is, I will not be instrumental in bringing people together, who perhaps ought not to meet.”

In despair, Sir Charles at length withdrew. He returned, however, in the afternoon, to the siege, was desired to call in the evening: and in the evening he went again, Miss Monckton was alone, and the shades of twilight could not entirely conceal that she had been weeping. Without entering into the particulars of the subject, she briefly, but kindly, told the unhappy young man “that she had been desired by Constance to intimate, that the resolution which she had expressed to him in her letter, was not to be shaken; that it had been formed ere they last parted, when she felt,” said Miss Monckton, drying her eyes, “that it was a last interview.” Sir Charles received this intimation with such undisguised expression of distress, such vehement remorse for his past conduct, such utter despair for the future, that his too partial friend found it difficult to avoid giving him such consolation as the hope of shaking Miss Courtenay’s determination might afford.

“God bless you, my dear Miss Monckton,” said Sir Charles, rising and extending his hand to her. “I shall not trouble you again; only one word. Tell me, how is Constance? Does

she—does she regret our separation too keenly? Or does she bear it like herself?”

“She is not utterly cast down,” answered Miss Monckton, after a short pause. “Most people,” she continued, “think that ungovernable grief extorts the deepest sympathy. I am of a different opinion; and it appears to me that there is no sight so affecting, as that of a person deeply wounded; yet striving, for principle’s sake, to bear the shafts of affliction with submission.”

“I thank you, dear Miss Monckton; I am comforted—comforted to think that she can bear it—better than I do; that she may in time forget me,” returned Sir Charles, as he pressed fervently the hand of his friend, and quitted the house.

It was the belief of Miss Monckton that Sir Charles left Newberry that evening, and she imparted that persuasion to Constance. The unhappy girl leaned her head upon her hands, and felt that she almost desired never to raise it again. She had wished for, urged his departure; yet when it really arrived, it seemed as if the grave had closed upon her hopes. Re-

solute in acting, Constance, like many ardent and sanguine characters, sank into utter dejection when the stimulus to mental exertion was withdrawn. She spoke not, stirred not, and so tearless, and moanless, was her sorrow, that the casual observer might have called it patience. But Miss Monckton knew better: she saw that her young frame had received a shock, through the medium of her feelings, which excited alarm both in her and Emily. They raised her from her seat, and placed her on her bed: they spoke kind and soothing words to her, and administered such remedies as they thought would restore the deadened circulation to its wonted course. The voice of kindness was seldom heard unheeded by Constance: she appreciated their efforts, and gratefully strove to show that they were not unavailing. So framed was she to love, and be beloved, that she seemed to cling with renewed affection to these, her only true friends. She grasped the hand of Miss Monckton, and would not let her leave her. She felt desolate if the arm of her fond and sympathizing Emily were not entwined within her's. Some days elapsed, and to all outward appearances the sisters were

as tranquil, and the current of their lives as monotonous as usual. Constance supported the formal breakfast, the long and unintellectual dinner, the unvaried ever-returning tea-time, with pensive firmness. Emily was composed when she glanced not at her sister's altered face; and Mr. and Mrs. Cattell observed no change in either. Mrs. Cattell went on with her worsted work, and her husband settled his accounts with a firm persuasion that they were of paramount importance, and without ever giving one thought to love or lovers. Emily had refused to leave Constance, until she saw her able in some degree to resume her usual occupations, and again beheld her, with pleasure, take up her pencil; but, alas! it was often thrown down with an air of hopeless indifference, or the half-finished drawing was bathed with tears. They read together; but, oh! the same authors pleased not—there was a void in the mind of one reader; the stimulus to self-culture was gone, and every idea, every recollection was interwoven with him whom she should see no more. The day rolled heavily along, the night was usually passed in tears, checked only by

unrefreshing sleep. At last, on one fine morning, Constance, struck with sudden alarm at Emily's pale face, prevailed upon her sister to walk abroad. In about an hour, she heard Emily's light step coming hurriedly up the staircase: she roused herself from the reverie in which she had indulged, and turned to greet her sister.

"Constance, I have seen him," cried Emily, her face glowing with earnestness and pleasure; "he is come back again."

"And what is that to me?" answered her sister, turning away, yet a faint blush tinged her cheek.

"But will you not see him, Constance, since he has much to say to you? he bade me tell you so."

"And how can he suppose that I would listen to it?" returned Constance rather indignantly; yet such is the weakness of human nature, that a feeling resembling joy crept over her.

"O Constance! I hope you will see him: it may not be quite so bad as you think: he is

waiting for my answer on the bridge.—Will you not meet him at Miss Monckton's?"

"No, my dear sister," said Constance; "if he has aught of happiness to impart to me, he can write.—But oh! how can there be? How can he unsay what he has said! and why am I thus tortured, with a renewal of a theme so hopeless!"

She spoke with a vehemence of grief which showed that the sorrows of the past had slumbered, but had not expired, within her bosom. But she added, "No, Emily, I will not see him."

"Then I must go to Miss Monckton, and bid her tell him so, for doubtless he will soon be there, in hopes of your coming."

"But tell me, Emily," cried Constance, as her sister was leaving the room; "how does he look? Is he well, and does he seem happy?"

"He looks, dear Constance, as he ever did—like a superior being descended among the creatures whom they call gentlemen in Newberry; but as to happy, I can scarcely tell what might be the expression of his countenance, for

he was so overjoyed at seeing me. He was alone, and on horseback, and seemed as if he had been riding far. But you *will* see him, Constance; I am sure some happy turn of fate will yet unite you. I cannot fancy that he will ever marry any one but you."

"Ah, Emily, you do not consider," replied Constance, "that were I now to think of such an event, all confidence would be lost, all respect for his character gone. He has deceived me once. I forgive it, O too readily! but I must be mad to trust him again."

Such was her resolution, and, happily for her, such a portion of indignation was mingled with the poignancy of her sorrow, as kept her up to these intentions. But she had still temptations and trials to encounter. Sir Charles remained at the Priory for a week, and, during that time, left no means unemployed to persuade her to an interview: his circumstances were yet unchanged, and all his hopes of retaining her affection rested upon the influence which he knew himself to possess in her heart, and with that persuasion he still calculated on continuing a secret engagement, which future

events might favour. Actuated by his feelings, and by those only, he forgot every object but Constance; and whilst his pride of ancestry revolted at the idea of being humbled from his station as the head of an ancient house, he yet thought not of the degradation which his present conduct was entailing upon his own character. Much might be urged in extenuation of the young Baronet: his mother's errors, his father's example, his own irregular education, his unfortunate circumstances, his natural temperament and disposition—and many, too many excuses suggested themselves in his favour to the mind of Constance. Accustomed, however, from childhood to depend upon her own sense of right to guide her, she repelled conscientiously the slightest admission which could lead her to disregard her secret monitor.

“There is a wide distinction between right and wrong,” said she. “He has chosen the latter; shall I be the aider and abettor in his road to evil?”

For some days, however, Sir Charles hovered around her, as a moth near the candle which is to consume him. Constance remained a close

prisoner to the house, and although she longed unspeakably to catch, unseen, a glimpse of him, she never even approached the window until the streets were nearly empty. Twice, however, she saw him, and on both occasions she felt how dangerous it is to have the vision of the night, the object of our daily thoughts, visibly before us, even though it be but a passing glance. One clear and warm evening she threw up her window, after Emily had retired to rest, to catch the freshness of the evening breeze, before whose gentle force the light clouds which scudded across the moon's disk were impelled, seeming, when compared to the dark blue firmament, as the shades upon the surface of the onyx. The town, and all its precincts seemed to be wrapped in repose, and now and then the melancholy bark of the watchdog, or the distant plashing of the barge upon the river, which was navigable for vessels of a certain size, were the only sounds which broke that stillness, which in itself, without the accompaniments of night and gloom, is awful. Constance was looking wistfully towards the Priory, the tops of whose aged chesnut trees

were just visible from her window, when the appearance of Sir Charles's favourite dog, on the opposite side of the street, wagging his tail in the moon-beams, attracted her attention. In a few moments he was followed by his master, whose gait and figure, habitually erect, yet easy, she could not mistake. She saw, too, instantly, that he turned his head eagerly towards her guardian's house, and walked rapidly forward as he saw her, yet she was cruel enough to shut the window down, and resolute enough not to return to it again.

The next and last time that she beheld him was also but for a moment. She was prevailed upon by Emily and Miss Monckton to stroll out one evening, by the assurance that Sir Charles had been seen by Mrs. De Courcy to set off towards Marchmont that morning, and that Enoch, being catechized by Miss Pearson's maid, had given the intelligence that his master had gone somewhere to meet his steward, on particular business. Induced by these representations, and feeling weary of her present immured existence, Constance, languid from confinement to the house, and hopeless and

heart-sick, felt her spirits somewhat cheered by the prospect of change of scene.

It was a favourite custom of the few people of taste in Newberry, to walk to what was called the "Philbrook Water," and hither Miss Monckton and her young friends directed their steps. They passed the bridge, and sauntered along a straight road, all prospect from which was intercepted by a thick avenue of larches, pines, and sycamores, forming, on either side, the boundary of private property. The road gradually ascended, until it led to a spot wherein Milton might have written his "*Il Penseroso*," or Young, composed his "*Night Thoughts*." Yet, it was by day-light, a scene rather still than solemn, rather tranquil than melancholy; but now, when the three ladies viewed it, the approach of twilight had obscured its gentler features, and darkened those which most favoured ideas of gloom. The descent was far more steep than the approach, and led to a broad expanse of water, a natural stream, amplified by art, banked on each side by thickly wooded declivities. The picturesque points, and sometimes rocky pinnacles, which appeared

half clothed with trees, the innumerable silver birches, now streaming to the breeze, now hanging pensive and motionless, like beauty in grief; the dark firs, proudly overtopping their feeble companions; and, above all, the silence and retirement of the place, broken only by the querulous language of birds, or the gambols of the squirrel, had suggested to Sir Charles a resemblance, faint indeed, but pleasing, to the wild and woody glen of the Trosacs. By this name he and Constance were often wont to call it, when in hours, never to be thought of without a sigh, they had stood on the brink of the water, and watched the volatile and agile moorhen, dipping her dark plumage in the wave, or the heron, fit emblem of solitude, ruffling her feathers with her long bill, on the opposite shore.

“We are not the only persons who like Philbrook, I perceive,” said Miss Monckton, as they walked down towards the water.

“That is Mr. Bouverie,” added Emily, “standing on the beach, by the ferry.”

“He is probably going to cross to the village to-night,” said Miss Monckton; “but the boat is on the other side, and there is so little custom,

that it is a chance if he gets over ; but no, he is coming this way."

He turned, indeed, and met them, but did not, as Constance expected, walk on towards Newberry ; on the contrary, he went back with them to the water side. The rapid drawing in of the evenings, for it was now the middle of August, had suddenly cast into gloom the glossy surface which had, not many minutes before, been gleaming to the departing rays of the sun. Still the reflection of the spiral larch, and of the light stems of the birch, were apparent ; and even the long blades of grass, and the towering foxglove, had their image in the still waters below. Constance seated herself on the bank, and tried to feel in unison with the scene ; but the power of enjoyment was gone. She pushed back her bonnet, to receive the fresh gales, which blew, perfumed with the aromatic scent of the pine and juniper, across the waters ; but they seemed to refresh her not. Emily was soon buried in the woods, searching for wild flowers ; Miss Monckton and Mr. Bouverie stood by Constance. None of the party spoke much, and once it crossed the mind of Constance,

that it was strange Mr. Bouverie should never allude to their last meeting, and to her illness. He must, she thought, know the cause of her distress. After a short stay, Miss Monckton, dreading the night air, proposed their return. They set out, but Constance still lingered after them, indulging that melancholy kind of rumination in which the mind sometimes luxuriates. A softened sense of the past inspired her with something like regret for her well-meant firmness towards her lover. Full of mournful recollections, the scene which they had often enjoyed together, seemed to reproach her with her conduct. In this mood she lingered after her friends, when a horseman appeared at some distance.

“Miss Courtenay,” said Mr. Bouverie, suddenly turning back, “will you accept of my arm? you seem fatigued.”

Constance took it almost unconsciously; for in the outline of the figure now ascending the hill, she saw a resemblance to Sir Charles; and it was he: her eyes were rivetted upon him, as he slowly advanced to the party; yet he passed it—passed, without one effort to speak to her again. A low, but distant bow, to all in com-

mon, was the only recognition which he chose to give ; but Emily observed that his eye rested stedfastly, and almost angrily, upon Mr. Bouverie, as he rode by the party. Thus closed Sir Charles's present acquaintance with Newberry, from which, on the following morning, he departed, with the avowed resolution of not returning to it for some years.

CHAPTER V.

Pliny has very well observed, that he who has impudence may very easily pass for a physician ; but Hippocrates proved by his own conduct how right he was in saying, “that a philosophical physician resembled the gods.”

ANON.

THE reader must suppose some months to have elapsed since the incidents related in the last chapter ; he must picture to himself Constance, restored, to all outward appearance, to her usual composure, if not to her former enjoyment. Whatever had been her sufferings, the world had known them not, nor had the “stranger intermeddled with her grief.” He must also conceive Emily grown in stature, improved in mind, and becoming womanly in her deportment ; and, with little effort of the imagination, he may pourtray Miss Monckton

sick, and cross, and wrapped in flannels, in her easy chair.

Autumn had succeeded to winter, and winter to autumn, yet had the two sisters passed the even tenor of their days, without the hope of an incident to vary the sameness of their existence, when Miss Monckton fell dangerously ill. It was perhaps fortunate for Constance that she had at present an occupation which afforded her the consolatory assurance that she was essential, at least, to one person besides Emily, in whom the full force of her blighted affections now chiefly rested. It was likewise well for her to be impelled into a course of minute occupations, which imperatively called her from reflections too well calculated to be inimical to her happiness. Miss Monckton's dependence upon her, and their mutual regard, was confirmed by habit, and enhanced, perhaps, by the circumstances which had excited, on the one hand, sympathy, and drawn forth confidence on the other. Dissimilar as were their characters, habits, and situations in life, their respective dispositions assimilated. Constance was endeared to Miss Monckton by recent trials,

which had been borne in unrepining silence; Miss Monckton was endeared to Constance by genuine sympathy, and by disinterested kindness.

Her presence in the sick chamber became indispensable to Miss Monckton: Emily might write her notes, might even pay her bills; but Miss Monckton could endure the attendance of no one but Constance in her own room. Constance could arrange her pillows, and hold her aching head, with that patience, kindness, and address, which an invalid so deeply prizes: and Constance was happy that Emily's less adroit attentions pleased not, because she thought her sister looked at times pale, and betrayed more sensibility on trifling occasions than was compatible with a state of perfect health. Alas! she now lived for Emily alone.

After an illness of some duration, after daily criticisms of her pulse by Dr. Stately for six weeks, and almost hourly visitations of Mr. Doubledose, whose bustling entrance into her room, was usually the prelude of a deluge of pink draughts, succeeded by a hail-storm of

pills ; Miss Monckton was sufficiently reduced in strength, and debilitated in mind, for all the town to give her over, unanimously, to the clergyman and the sexton. Constance, herself, often dreaded the result of so much weakness, yet it appeared to her, that there was no specific disease, nor any alarming symptom, notwithstanding Dr. Stately's repeated assurances that Miss Monckton must have a pain in her side, and his appearing to think it quite a duty that she should own to it ; nor Doubledose's mysterious face after one of his searching queries, which never seemed to go more than skin deep. At length the invalid was out of patience : she began to offer Dr. Stately his fee reluctantly ; she saw a detachment of potions and draughts come in, and allowed them to be arranged upon her table, like so many mementos of every malady in existence, but refused to take any of them, and looked at them with a face half cross, half despairing, not even allowing Doubledose to make one of what he called his examinations, which consisted in a smart thump upon her side, with an inquiry of, " No pain

there, ma'am ? a little adhesion of the ribs I suspect ; I am sure you shrunk."

"Any one would shrink, Mr. Doubledose—I am not used to pugilistic exercises," answered the worthy spinster, in a tone of irritation ; "and if there be not adhesion already, I am sure you will produce it."

"Very irritable, Miss Courtenay, very irritable, indeed, ma'am," said Doubledose to Constance, as she lighted him down stairs one evening : "I consider her complaint to be chiefly irritability of the nervous system, pathologically speaking, for which I threw in my little drop of comfort, my valerian draughts, you will observe, Miss Courtenay. But she don't take half her medicines ? How many have you administered to her to day, Mistress Jane ?" turning to her servant.

"Not fewer than nine, sir."

"And the pills between ?"

"Why, really no—for indeed what with breakfast, dinner, and tea, my misses could not contrive to get them in."

"Very true, very true ; but there you see

my medicine has not fair play. Miss Courtenay, do you know, we are afraid of phthisis."

"What is that, sir?" said Constance, in extreme apprehension, for the word had an excruciating sound.

"Why, only—consumption, a complaint which never *is* cured, although my own plan, for incipient phthisis, I believe to be unique. Patients ought *not* to die under it, but they will: there's no managing some people—good night, Miss Courtenay—good night, Jane: I shall see our patient again to-morrow," added this worthy practitioner of a liberal profession, as he skipped into his small vehicle, and drove off to reduce the strength and purse of some neighbouring farmer.

"And is this all that medicine can do? To tell one the worst, and leave despair to do the rest," thought Constance—"my dear, dear friend!"

"And then," said Emily, who joined her, "there is Dr. Stately, with his panada, his barley-water, his lemonade, his weak beef-tea, his rue-tea, his tamarind-tea; and all the rest of that tea-family, which seem only intended to

make one sick. I wonder if one is *obliged* to die under his hands."

A circumstance, however, occurred, which seemed intended by Providence, to relieve and cheer the suffering Miss Monckton, and to solace the anxieties of her young friends. True, it was prefaced with an event of a tragic nature; but when we are ill ourselves, we are not apt to despond over other people's misfortunes. A letter, sealed with black, and impressed with a coat of arms, as flourishing and rampant as that of the Herald's office, was handed to Miss Monckton one morning during the absence of Constance. It ran as follows:—

“DEAR MISS MONCKTON;

“My amiable friend;—Mrs. Kilderby, is no more! I am distracted!!! This morning, at six o'clock, her gentle spirit took its flight. I can say no more, but that I am

“Your inconsolable,

“W. KILDERBY.”

“P. S. Enclosed I send you a copy of verses, written on the melancholy occasion. The writer

desires to be incog: Dr. Creamly mistook them for Burns's.—By-the-bye, his attentions have been invaluable, and though the dear angel ordered him out of her room, for what she called hushing matters up, I can never repay him for his management of her disease. Adieu, Remember me."

In a few days this letter was followed by another :—

"It will be the greatest solace to me, my dear Miss Monckton, to talk over the dear departed, with you, *propria personæ*, and to read to you, what appeared in the Bath Herald, written by one who too fondly appreciated her virtues. I propose taking up my abode, not with you, (for the world may talk,) but near you; but remember I am *en devil*, and do not let the good people of Newberry find me out. Dr. Creamly, who seems really to idolize the poor Bath bard, will accompany me.

"Yours ever, most truly,

"W. KINDERBY."

“ Well, dear Miss Monckton,” said Constance, as she finished reading the last of these two epistles, “ suppose you let Dr. Creamly prescribe for you.”

“ What ! after his admirable management of Mrs. Kilderby’s disease ? You want to get rid of me, Constance !”

“ But you know there are some people, who, as Mr. Doubledose says, *will* die ; now I suspect that Mrs. Kilderby was one of those, for you know she always had her own way in every thing. However, it is wrong to jest upon so serious a subject. But seriously, I cannot help thinking, that if you had any one except Dr. Stately, who seems to be fit for little more than to write prescriptions in a lady-like hand, upon gilt-edged paper ; or than Mr. Doubledose, whose very footsteps are tracked by—what does he call it ? his ‘ Pharmacopæia ’—and whose very smile, as Emily says, is *ether-ial*, you would—”

“ Cease to trouble my friends, a little sooner,” said Miss Monckton with a groan of mingled suffering and impatience.

“ And then if we could get you out into the

fresh air," continued Constance, endeavouring to raise the spirits of her friend.

"And why don't you think of my spiritual welfare?" inquired Miss Monckton; "shall we not call in Doctor Bouverie? Ah, Constance, why hide your face?"

"For no reason—but that—I hope, dear Miss Monckton, you will not vex me by again urging the topic which has of late been so disagreeable to you, and productive of so much irritation. Think not that I can forget—that I can ever forget—what I once hoped would come to pass."

Miss Monckton sighed, for it had been the amusement of her waking hours, to picture to herself, Constance, happy in an union which fate seemed not to oppose. She saw, what every one suspected, that whilst the modest and exemplary young minister sought no opportunities of urging a suit which he believed to be hopeless, that a look or a word from Constance, would bring him forward as her lover. It was true, that Mr. Bouverie's mode of life had been of late somewhat changed. By the death of his father, an ample fortune had been added to

the profits of his living, and he was now considered to be a wealthy man. All the town were in speculation about him: he was at present the hero of the place. Yet he seemed not to dream of marrying, although innumerable matches were kindly arranged for him. Miss Pearson went to church more frequently than ever, and Mrs. De Courcy now returned her good offices about Sir Charles, by catering for news of the vicar's movements.

"How Miss Pearson deals in new bonnets this year!" said Mrs. Crawford, as she walked out of church after hearing a sermon against detraction.

"No, but Agnes Collins is the favoured lady," whispered the youngest Miss Seagrave mysteriously.

"How do you know?"

"How do I know—are they not come to live in Newberry on purpose, and was he not doing duty for Mr. Collins at Philbrook, and she at home alone, when her father and sisters were away?"

"Indeed! then Miss Pearson may wear the willow," said Mrs. Crawford with a smile,

such as those worthy women who are come to the age of self-complacency alone can give.

“ And Miss Courtenay—there’s something really very odd about this girl—I really can’t make out whether she had a disappointment about that Dr. Creamly from Bath, and that he’s now come over to do her justice, or whether that young Manvers jilted her; or, as Mrs. De Courcy insinuates, that she was in love with Sir Charles.”

“ She has never been well since he left,” said Mrs. Crawford, in a tone of gentle pity.

“ She has not been like the same person—her arms, which used to be so beautiful, are as thin—and don’t you think her spirits quite gone?—how dolorous she sits at church.”

“ I never look off my book, Miss Catherine,” answered Mrs. Crawford; “ but I have heard, that at evening service, some months back, she fainted away.”

“ It’s a shocking thing if she should be in love with a married man—for Sir Charles is as good as married. It won’t be long before we

shall have a young Lady Marchmont at the Priory, I fancy, by what the gardener says."

"And when we have, then we shall see how matters stand with Miss Courtenay," rejoined Mrs. Crawford.

Notwithstanding the good wishes of all his female friends, Mr. Bouverie was neither discovered to have a new carriage in progress, nor to be altering his house, nor to be receiving daily letters—for this is a point which Miss Pearson ascertained at the post office—in a feminine hand. When he had recovered the death of his father, to whom he was sincerely attached, his accession of fortune seemed to produce no other change in him, than to render him bountiful, where he had before been charitable; liberal, in things in which he had before been hospitable only. He had always mixed in the best society in the neighbourhood; he now only so far extended his acquaintance, as to enter into many schemes and associations for the public good, in which he had before taken but a limited part. He was much sought after, his opinion greatly respected, and he was

considered as a person of considerable influence in the county. His liberal and kind actions were the theme of commendation to those who knew them. Where he could, he always preferred exciting to industry, in lieu of teaching the too easily learned lesson of depending upon others: but he was generally sure to encourage exertion, by relieving pressing want, which, in some instances, deadens the power of action. One good deed of which Constance heard, delighted her exceedingly: this was, his rendering poor old Rose independent of parochial aid, and enabling her to keep with her, one of her grand-children to attend her in her old age. But this was only one of the many unostentatious acts of well-judging benevolence in which Mr. Bouverie indulged himself—for to him the performance of such actions was an indulgence, and by which he, perhaps, solaced himself for the deprivation of other blessings natural to his age to desire, and now, not incompatible with his circumstances, to obtain.

The people of Newberry prided themselves upon being neighbourly—that is, tormenting a

person's servants to death, when illness occurred in a family, with inquiries; pumping out all those circumstances, which, in some instances, the afflicted are anxious to keep secret; commenting upon, and generally blaming the invalid for some fancied or real cause of his or her misfortune; intruding far too soon in cases of recovery, and condoling far too much in events of a fatal nature. Miss Pearson and Mrs. Crawford absolutely made it a business to ferret out a knowledge of Miss Monckton's complaint; to discover how many fees Dr. Stately took, and what Doubledose's bill would be: they watched, indeed, his medicine basket, and counted the draughts which were sent, with far more precision than the little amphibious reptile, between a servant and a messenger, who delivered them, had the forecast to do.

At last a charming object of their scrutiny was given to their longing eyes; this was an elderly gentleman in black, who was seen coming out of Miss Monckton's house; eyes, large and blue, complexion fair and fresh, hair scanty, but brushed up till it nearly stood on an

end, and was what the French call *herissée*; dress wholly new, and of the last fashion for deep mourning. Neither Mrs. Crawford nor Miss Pearson could make out what was his vocation: he was seen in the middle of the day, traversing the streets, laden with newly bound books, one of which he deposited at the door of some of the principal inhabitants, accompanying the deposit with a black-edged card. There sometimes walked beside him, a gentleman of singularly mild demeanour, finical neatness, and precision of step. A sweet smile sat constantly on his lips, and his dark eyes were seldom raised from the ground. He was younger than the former gentleman, and was pronounced by the ladies, to be not “handsome, but interesting and genteel.” Conflicting conjectures for some time harassed the minds of Mrs. Crawford and Miss Pearson respecting this second apparition of a male stranger; an event not common in a land flowing with old maids and widows. At first they thought that the younger gentleman might be a clergyman; there was a pious sedateness in his air which would have suited a meeting-house, where the

distinction of gown and bands being unknown, a peculiar sanctity of aspect is expected in the preacher. Then they fancied he might be son to the elderly gentleman; but there was a deference and gentleness in his manners to the former, not often to be met with in sons of the modern times. At one time they came to the decision that he might be domestic physician to the stranger in black; they even went so far as to surmise that he might possibly be the gentleman's gentleman: at last, Miss Pearson settled the question—for meeting the old gentleman one day in the Priory grounds, with his pencil in his hand, his eyes uplifted, and open-mouthed, catching inspiration, as it were, from the surrounding scenery, she became convinced that he was a harmless lunatic, and his friend a keeper, placed about him for security.

Guess their surprise, then, when they were told by the Miss Seagraves, who were told by Miss Monckton's maid, (whom, under pretence of kindness, they had seduced into their house to catechize,) that the elder stranger was Mr. Kilderby, of Bath, formerly well known in Newberry as impromptu maker general at balls

and card assemblies, but now a widower, and looking out for a wife; and that the younger gentleman was the famous Dr. Creamly, at Bath, who had been travelling physician to the Dowager Marchioness of ———, and had recovered her ladyship from a nervous complaint in five years. He had now come over to Newberry to cure Miss Monckton, and to marry Miss Courtenay. Of course, Miss Pearson took care that the latter part of this intelligence should not be thrown away without imparting it to Mr. Bouverie. A moment's flush came to his cheek, as she awkwardly brought in the intelligence; but, as she and Mrs. De Courcy afterwards, in consultation, agreed together, that might be surprise, or shyness; or a thousand little circumstances may account for a blush. "Or it may not have been on Miss Courtenay's account at all," observed Mrs. De Courcy, with a significant look at her friend.

Meantime, Dr. Creamly's soothing, composing system of medicinal practice was doing wonders with Miss Monckton's emaciated frame, whose only disease was—physic. Her internal mechanism was literally never allowed

to be at rest. If she complained of languor, Dr. Stately instantly wrote a prescription for some stimulant mixture; if she spoke a little above the natural key to Doubledose, he immediately despatched a composing pill for her use. Now Dr. Creamly had studied in Geneva, and was one of those doctors who, like those practitioners termed Homæopathian, in the present day, cure by expectancy. His doses of a hundredth part of a grain, his recommendation of a leech to-day, and another to-morrow, were therefore so far salutary to Miss Monckton, as they allowed poor human nature to have a little rest. Then his charming conversation, sweet as almond emulsion, his submission to all Miss Monckton's whims, his accessibility to all her jokes, when she revived a little, were contrasted with Dr. Stately's imperviousness to any thing but his fee, Doubledose's red face and fluster, and the business-like undertaking of the case, of both. By degrees Miss Monckton's spirits and appetite improved: instead of dividing the wing of a chicken into four parts, and taking each at the interval of half an hour, as Dr. Creamly suggested, she ate the whole of that

orthodox, invalid meal at one sitting, and began to wish for some draught more generous than the combination of ether, camphor, gentian, and assafoetida, forming a result to the palate and the smell something approaching to the fume of the "bottomless pit," as King James would say, but composing, a specific designated by Double-dose, by the comfortable name of his "warm draught." Constance watched with delight the convalescence of her friend, and thought that she should be perfectly happy when she saw her restored to health: but alas! with leisure regained, and freedom from anxiety, thoughts of the past and of the absent, returned; and as Miss Monckton became less dependant on her care, Miss Courtenay's spirits were observed to decline. There was no lack of society, however, to vary the hours of the invalid, when she moved down stairs, or to remove the pensiveness of her friend's countenance. Mr. Kilderby and Dr. Creamly usually made their appearance in the well-warmed drawing-room at such time as "Evening, with her matron step, slow moving," blessed mankind with "sweet oblivion of the cares of day." And Mr.

Bouverie, who had been unremitting in his attentions to Miss Monckton, as he ever was, indeed, both to the rich and the poor in illness, had of late got somehow or other into the habit of joining their party. He spoke, however, less to Constance than to any one; and whilst his manly good sense, his well stored and well arranged mind, and his well weighed opinions, presented to the pretensions of Mr. Kilderby, and to the flimsy theories which Dr. Creamly called philosophy, the same contrast, morally speaking, that a rich oil painting presents to a miniature in water colours, he seemed to gain ground on the heart of every person, except Constance. It was not that she had not the highest respect and regard for him, but, unhappily, when the affections of the young and ardent are centered in an object from whom Fate has severed us, present concerns and present objects fail to interest, except as they afford associations which are connected with our secret wishes and secret regrets. Constance endeavoured in vain to be exclusively occupied with the kind friends around her; she appreciated Mr. Bouverie's talents, and almost revered

his character; but a word from any one recalling the recollection of Sir Charles, the tones of a voice which resembled his, the first line of a song which she had sung to him, or even a glance at the chair wherein he used to sit, were sufficient to call back his image to her mind, and to render her abstracted and indifferent, until her native benevolence inspired her with the resolution of shaking off sorrow for the sake of others.

Mr. Bouverie saw, if no one else did, that the young, and beautiful, and once gay Constance, was changed: he saw it with deep compassion and concern, and he felt that it would be wiser for him to withdraw from her society, and to check all hopes of gaining her affections. He often made the resolution, and as often found himself at Miss Monckton's door. He knew not how it was, but he could not help being even more interested in Constance, serious, absent, and indifferent to pleasure as she had now become, than in the buoyant, joyous girl whom he had first admired as a rose-bud bursting into the fulness of bloom, fresh with the dews of a May morning. He thought that she had been deceived, but he trusted when that event

occurred which he expected would occur, to undeceive her, that the native strength of her mind would enable her to overcome an ill-placed, and perhaps ill-requited affection. He thought all this, and much more; and to say that she was the object of his earnest solicitude, the leading star of his hopes, that he pondered on every thing that could grieve her, or that could cheer her, that he dwelt silently and secretly on every look, and hung upon every word, is but a faint picture of those multifarious and indescribable feelings which constitute love in the masculine mind, when it is unhackneyed in such emotions, and untainted by dissipation. Winter passed away, and he felt that his happiness became more and more deeply involved in her, his fate more decidedly bound up in hers; yet he often reproached himself for yielding to a sentiment so little encouraged, and sometimes strove to throw off the yoke of an attachment so apparently hopeless. "Yet I cannot desert her," he thought: "her situation, and that of Emily, is so destitute of friends or advisers; they are so much exposed to the envy of their own sex, and to the vil-

lainy of ours. Surely I may, at least, have the gratification of watching over them, and of doing my best to warn, if not protect, them from danger."

It was some weeks after Christmas had turned, and the Snow-drop and Aconite had begun to recall the thoughts of spring, whilst the weather still partook of the angry blasts of winter, that Constance read in the provincial papers, a paragraph relative to Sir Charles Marchmont, conveying an intimation of his expected marriage with Miss Herbert.

"He has then forgotten me," said she, as she laid down the paper. "That which I urged has come to pass! but, oh! how soon!" This blow seemed quite to overcome her fortitude: the chastened grief, the repressed regrets of months were brought to their climax of anguish by this intelligence. She wept, as one that had no hope; she felt herself broken-hearted, and thought that no earthly consolation could now comfort her.

"He has never loved me!" was the first passionate exclamation; "I have deceived myself, and bitterly am I punished."

Unhappily for her subsequent peace of mind, this conviction lasted not. The remembrance of those passages in her life, in which he had been concerned, was revived, only to convey to her the harassing reflection that he was about to be sacrificed to one whom he loved not ; that she had hastened him to his fate ; that the sacrifice of sincerity would be succeeded by that of principle. Overwhelmed by all these considerations, Constance passed the day in an agitation of feeling unusual to her ; and when the evening arrived, found herself quite unequal to pay her usual visit to Miss Monckton. She sent Emily, however, lest her friend should be disappointed, and desiring her to plead for her a head-ache, abandoned herself to the wretchedness of her own thoughts. Emily went later than usual, and found Miss Monckton seated at her little tea-table, surrounded by Mr. Kilderby, Dr. Creamly, and Mr. Bouverie. She made her sister's apologies, and a general gloom pervaded the party for a few moments. Mr. Bouverie was the only person who had seen the paragraph relating to Sir Charles, and he looked much graver and sadder than the rest. Mr. Kilderby

always found Miss Courtenay polite, and forbearing to ridicule his foible, and soothing to his self-love, and he looked upon her as a sort of protection against the vivid wit of Miss Monckton: he was therefore disappointed. Dr. Creamly pretended to be so, but his feelings were more equivocal. He was what most men of sentiment are, a secret flirt: he took a singular pleasure in fancying himself the hero to a certain number of heroines, and of exciting, by certain indefinite attentions, a romantic interest in them towards himself. He had always a number of ladies on his list, every one of whom supposed that various obstacles alone prevented him from avowing a predilection for herself, and he had hoped to have added Miss Courtenay to the number. Her real indifference, her artless good-nature, and the attachment which he instantly perceived that she felt for Sir Charles, had, however, convinced him that the game in that quarter was already won. He seldom, also, fixed upon the highest prizes for his own peculiar portion. In the first place, he might in that case interfere with the wishes of his superiors, and so with his own interests; and then he found that the slow,

and gradual, and secret siege which it was his plan to commence, was not rapid enough, as the ladies were apt to be carried off by a *coup-de-main* before he had fairly begun his tactics. Married ladies of a certain age, young women of more susceptibility than beauty, governesses and younger sisters, were therefore his usual prey. He had now fixed upon Emily Courtenay, as a fill up in the wastes of Newberry, where few belles were to be found with whom to flirt. No one could see her without admiration. Her elegance of form and manner were inspirited by intelligence surpassing her years, and an entire freedom from girlish flirtishness characterized her deportment. Dr. Creamly found her, indeed, so obtuse to his insidious advances, so totally to be taught to flirt, that he would have given up the attack as a hopeless case, if he had not had a scheme in hand, which rendered his gaining ground with one of the Miss Courtenays desirable in his eyes. He dreaded, however, the watchful care of Constance, and regretted not, on that account, her temporary absence from the little circle of which she was the fairest ornament.

Tea passed over with a languor very unusual with this small coterie, when Miss Monckton's fidgetty movements broke forth into open complaints.

"Invalids," said she, "are fond of their own way. Which of my beaux will go down to Mr. Cattell's, and see if they can persuade Constance to come to us?"

"I should feel too much honoured," said Dr. Creamly, not moving.

"I fear my request would be unavailing," observed Mr. Bouverie, coldly.

"I am the man!" cried Mr. Kilderby, starting up, and buttoning on his coat. "If prose won't prevail, I'll address her in strains of verse.—I'll tell you what, Miss Emily," winking his eye, "I'll tell her, just to bring her, you know, that I've got a scene of my new tragedy to read to her. She'll come, or I'll consent to give up Parnassus and the Nine for ever."

"I am afraid she won't come," said Emily sorrowfully—"she will, for Miss Monckton, sooner than for any one; but indeed I did all I could to persuade her."

"Oh! the ladies all run away with us poets.

you know, of old ; so I make no doubt I shall bring her to you, though all Newberry will talk of it, if the rhymer be found discoursing with a lady." And away he went, in full conviction of his own powers of persuasion.

Mr. Kilderby was a very long time before he returned to the tea party. Miss Monckton was alarmed, and even Emily thought that something must be the matter. Mr. Bouverie, with a countenance of anxiety, was walking up and down the room, when the Poet at last came leading in Constance. On being interrogated, he owned he had loitered by the way, apostrophizing the stars in rhythm ; but to reward the party for their patience, he would read the verses presently. Constance seemed scarcely able to smile even at this trait of her companion. The cold evening air had indeed slightly tinged her cheek with its freshness, but the ringlets which usually shaded her face, were thrown back from her forehead with the negligence of indifference. There was a settled sadness in her eyes, which no one could view without pity, and her mouth, naturally expressive of playfulness and sweetness, could scarcely frame itself to a smile. Yet

Emily was surprised to see her even so composed. The truth is, that Constance, when her sister had left her, had had recourse to the only remedy of the hopeless—prayer. She prayed for the erring, but unfortunate Sir Charles—she prayed for herself, that she might be strengthened to conquer affections which had now become sinful; and be enabled to see him happy, without repining. She resolved to cast off, by a vigorous effort, the grief which consumed her. She determined no longer to cherish a remembrance so fatal to her peace. Subdued and composed under these reflections, Mr. Kilderby found her, and as Mr. and Mrs. Cattell were at their whist party, there was no obstacle to her accompanying him; and Constance was too amiable not to desire to comply with the wishes of those who loved her.

The tear started to Miss Monckton's eye, as she saw her favourite, endeared to her more than ever, by recent kindness, so bowed down by grief; but Mr. Bouverie regarded her with still more acute feelings. He looked upon her as the victim of treachery; and indignation for

her wrongs was mingled, in his generous mind, with sorrow for her griefs. He paid her more attention than he had done for some time—drew a large easy chair towards the fire for her, and placed his own near it. The rest of the party were occupied with their separate concerns. Miss Monckton had her knitting ; Dr. Creamly and Emily were looking at prints ; Mr. Kilderby was hammering out a verse, looking up, every now and then, with a silver pencil-case in his hand, for ideas that flowed not, and thoughts that would not come. Constance leaned, mute, and almost motionless, in her chair ; her eyes were fixed on the fire, her head a little turned from the rest of the party. Mr. Bouverie leaned over her chair, and longed to address the language of kindness and of comfort to her. “Is your headache better?” said he at last, in a low voice.

“Thank you—it is not my head,” she replied, without looking at him.

“How I wish I could in any way mitigate the affliction which presses upon you,” said Mr. Bouverie, in a tremulous accent.

“You are very good,” was all the reply he received. Another pause ensued. “Is there any service that I can render you, Miss Courtenay?” at length inquired Mr. Bouverie, in the same low tone.

“Nothing; but to forget me,” answered Constance, hastily, and turning away from him.

Mr. Bouverie rose, and walked away. He was stung to the quick, and in the petulance of disappointed friendship, and of unrequited love, resolved to obey her. Constance had spoken unadvisedly, and she repented it bitterly. She had long wished to check the growing passion of Mr. Bouverie, and now that he appeared to consider himself privileged to come forward, she felt more determined than ever, since she could not marry Sir Charles, to encourage no other attachment. Angry with herself, for her mode of repelling Mr. Bouverie, in the attentions which he so seldom paid, and which were so delicately, and timidly, and kindly offered; she could not rouse from renewed dejection during the whole evening: had she wished to atone for her inconsiderateness,

it would have been in vain, for Mr. Bouverie, after remaining about an hour, quitted the party, and did not rejoin the coterie for some weeks. Constance was grieved at his manifest avoidance of her on the few occasions in which they did meet. She lamented him, as a lost friend; and his friendship having been chilled by her own coldness, she began to prize it more than ever. She was grieved that she had appeared ungrateful—she longed to show him some proof of her cordial regard for his character, and whilst she heard him universally commended, and saw him universally beloved, she felt how little she deserved the partiality which he had once bestowed upon herself.

CHAPTER VI.

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
 Admit impediments; love is not love
 Which alters, where it alteration finds
 Or bends, with the remover to remove.
 O no ! It is an ever fixed mark.

SHAKSPEARE.

MISS MONCKTON had felt very sensibly the attentions of her country friends, during her illness. Four of the Miss Tribes had paid a visit of condolence and congratulation at once ; had stayed three hours, and kindly taken the opportunity of executing some commissions for their mama, that they might see more of dear Miss Monckton, might come in and out of her house, dirty the floor-cloth, disturb the maids—but all from kindness, and anxiety to see how she really was. Then Mrs. Tribe had made a point of coming over herself, and of bringing over

two young scions of the Tribe family to delight the eyes of her sick friend; these were an overgrown boy of six years old, long reputed, and properly spoiled, as the youngest of the set: but this *lusus naturæ*, the last of the race, was not long to retain his infantile throne. To the consternation of the young ladies, and the surprise of all good judges, a ninth Tribe had appeared within the last year, when Mrs. Tribe's wrapping-gowns and baby-linen had become yellow, and the old nurse had almost forgotten how to hold a child. It had, however, the unmeaning blue eyes, ungainly nose, and unmannerly looking mouth of the family, and was now just beginning to be pronounced a "lively, charming, entertaining little creature." Of course it cried the whole time at Miss Monckton's, for no living creatures seem to be so sensible of what their own place ought to be, as babies; and the small, neat, hot room, in which it was esteemed sacrilege to move a chair, or to drop a pin, could not be a suitable place for the infant part of the creation. Miss Monckton writhed inwardly, whilst the visit passed in conjectures between

Mrs. Tribe and the nurse, as to what could possibly be the cause of this very unusual bad behaviour.

Then Mrs. Powis of Powis Court came over on purpose to bring Miss Monckton some fruit, and to pass a long morning with her. She arrived at eleven, and ordered her horses at four o'clock. Of course, Miss Monckton was sufficiently worn out; yet, as there were no children, she had the consolation of giving Mrs. Powis the whole history of her case, a narrative which the good lady only interrupted by—"Well! I wish you had had my great aunt, Mrs. Lucas's recipe for your complaint;" or, "I heard the other day of some new pills, which cure every complaint, from apoplexy down to chilblains;"—or by expressions of sincere concern that she had been so ill, and of joy to see her now looking so well; the whole finishing by agreeing with Miss Monckton that Dr. Creamly must be a most superior man, and uncommonly clever in his profession. Miss Monckton had also a visit from Mrs. Clayton, and a call from the Doctor. The former stayed a modest half-hour, heard the usual detail of symptoms, and

criticism of treatment, and pitied her friend the more, that she thought herself getting into the same way. The doctor rode over on a long-backed, rough-legged horse, one cold winter's day; wearing his very worst hat, a moderate shovel; his least powdered wig, and a blue cloth spencer, which coming in contrast with a small portion of his coat, showed how often brown is, through politeness, called black. He alighted in great haste, carrying up to Miss Monckton a bottle of wine, which he had conveyed in his pocket, but, with his usual mixture of parsimony and generosity, desiring her to pay a penny to the boy who held his horse. He looked at her kindly and compassionately, as he tendered his gift, the servant, pursuant to order, bringing up a decanter, that the bottle might be returned.

“There, madam!” said he, with extended hand, lisping, through haste, more than ever, “this rich, curious, and ancient potation came from the very reverend and very learned Professor of Arabic in the university of Oxford, to Samuel Clayton, greeting. No compliments, no compliments. If I could do any thing for

thee, spiritually or medicinally, Jane Monckton, I would not leave thee destitute of good advice. Miss Courtenay," cried he, "see that thy patient drink this excellent wine daily, and let it be accompanied with a suitable condiment of spice and sugar, diluted with water, and flavoured with leaves of borragé, efficacious to the temper, and good for the spirits," he added with mysterious importance. "Fare thee well."

"The Doctor, no doubt, has rummaged up something out of his wine-cellar. I like none of his potations," said Miss Monckton, as soon as they were alone; "and as to his borragé, it is enough to make a much stronger person than I am sick. Sarah, take it away; rince the decanter well, and let me have my own good port again."

As spring returned, and Miss Monckton's health was nearly re-established, Dr. and Mrs. Clayton were very anxious that she and her young friends should join a party to dine at Mr. Bamford's, and view a park and house belonging to a wealthy nobleman, near the worthy bachelor's residence. "Jack," as the Doctor called him, had passed through Newberry, on

purpose to leave his invitations—one for Miss Monckton, another for Constance and her sister; but had been too modest to go in either at Miss Monckton's or at Mr. Cattell's. He made another journey, however, on hearing that Miss Monckton had two friends in Newberry, and left formal cards, and specific invitations for Mr. Kilderby and Dr. Creamly. These were answered in due season, and accepted with due gratitude; Mr. Kilderby taking care to apprise him, that as the author of *Clorintha*, nothing could be more agreeable to him than to track the dewy spring in congenial scenes, whilst Dr. Creamly's reply was a model of elegant penmanship and gentlemanly expression; just as much gratitude as might be deemed genteel, expressed in terms vibrating between condescension and humility. Mr. Collins and his daughter were nominated by Mr. Clayton to meet him. Mrs. de Courcy, Miss Pearson, and Mr. Wakley, edged themselves in somehow or other. Mr. Bouverie was invited everywhere, and honest John loved him too well, not only to ask him, but to insist upon his going.

“Why need you hesitate,” cried the worthy

Mr. Bamford; "I will show you the contrivances of art, and the beauties of nature; and, what is more, I will show you some fine girls."

Until the very day before, however, it was uncertain whether Mr. Bouverie would make one of the party or not. Miss Monckton said she had had enough of match-making, and that she would not ask him again; but happening to meet him at the public library, she could not resist telling him that one of the Miss Courtenays was to ride on horseback, and the other to be driven by Mr. Kilderby.

"Can my horses be of any use?" inquired Mr. Bouverie, wistfully.

"No, but you can be," replied Emily, who stood near, timidly, "if you will ride with us; for Constance, though so fond of riding herself, has given up that part of our day's enjoyments to me; and I am sure I shall be delighted if you will ride with me, Mr. Bouverie; and I would much prefer having you, to riding alone with Dr. Creamly, and that Mr. Wakley."

"She treats you like a brother," whispered Miss Monckton, archly.

“ And I shall be only too happy to behave as one, and to join you,” answered Mr. Bouverie, his face glowing with delight at Emily’s artless expressions of regard; and it was therefore agreed that he and his horses should be added to the cavalcade.

There was a grand settling over night of the mode in which they should go. Mr. Kilderby, who, since the death of his lady, had launched out a little, had offered his new, black, easy chariot, for Miss Monckton, which she, despite a little quizzing from Mrs. DeCourcy and Emily, had accepted. Mr. Wakley’s gig was at the service of any two persons; he was himself in hopes of enticing Constance to let him drive her in it; but Mr. Kilderby begged him, as he valued a poet’s locomotion, not to drive him to the dire extremity of showing his horsemanship.

“ I have never acted as Cavalier, he said, since the saddle turned round with me, and I saw a prospect between the horse’s legs. Never did I enjoy a view so little,” he added, with much simplicity.

“ This is irresistible,” said Mr. Wakley; “ and I would not for worlds destroy the embryo productions of the author of *Clorintha*.”

It was therefore arranged that Mr. Kilderby should drive one of the ladies. Now Mrs. De Courcy and Miss Pearson had each found out that his society was an infliction. He repeated his verses to them, when they wished to be talking themselves; he expected from them a kind of homage which they were only willing to pay to the young and agreeable; they, therefore, sidled off; and Constance, finding that no one else would have him, proposed to go with him herself, whilst the widow and her friend were destined to be Miss Monckton's supporters in the chariot. The appointed morning came, and contrary to the usual course of events, in most parties of pleasure, it was not only fine, and dry, but bright. After an early breakfast, the party set forth, Emily looking truly graceful in her riding attire; and were all in high spirits, except Constance, who entered into every arrangement with the languid air of a looker-on, rather than a participator in the expedition. It was arranged that they were to skirt, without stopping, the fine park of Alverston, and to meet Dr. and Mrs. Clayton, their host, and some other members of the party, at the splendid

mansion which they were afterwards to inspect. They were then to dismiss their horses, and to walk to Mr. Bamford's snug domicile. All this was accomplished without any accident, and greatly to the enjoyment of most of the party. Mr. Bouverie rode by Emily, jealous, as a brother, of her being too intimately approached by either of her other companions. Miss Pearson watched him from the carriage, and Mrs. De Courcy, on the other side, kept up a running flirtation of glances, smiles, and occasional observations with Dr. Creamly, who managed successfully to keep up the sentimentals both with Emily and with the young widow. Mr. Wakley was perfectly contented if he could only be endured in a fine woman's society; he never expected to be treated with more than civility by any respectable female. for, in those days, and in that simple society, character had *some* influence in the reception which men met with from ladies. Constance and her companion got on pretty well together. Having now been for some time enured to his society, she had found out that if he might be allowed to run on egotizing, and spouting verses, it was no great matter

whether people listened to him or not. She looked at the rich and smiling scenes through which they passed, whilst he was lyrical, tragical, or amatory, or epigrammatic, or elegiac, as the vein suited, and when she uttered the words "charming !" "beautiful !" he was perfectly satisfied that she meant to refer them to his verses. Enjoying, from an early age, the charms of nature, without seeking to define in what that enjoyment consisted, disappointed affections and blighted hopes had tended to heighten the pleasure which she derived from that source. In proportion as her relish for conversation declined, her fondness for solitary musing had increased. The image of one beloved object was, it is true, blended with scenes presented to her visual sense. In the first bitterness of her sorrow, she had, indeed, experienced "how ill the scenes that offer rest, and heart that cannot rest, agree;" but as time and absence had rendered her feelings less acute, she had returned to nature as to her first love, in whose smiles the vexations of life might be soothed, if not forgotten.

The well cultivated lands through which she

now passed, the winding, fringed brook, rattling its careless course beneath banks carpeted with primroses, or overgrown with hyacinths: the substantial old-fashioned farmhouse, its precincts teeming with the live creation, which gave it cheerfulness and importance; the rural, struggling village, undignified by aught of architectural aid, except its firm, but simple spire, sanctifying the scene;—all these succeeding objects were viewed by her, sometimes with benevolent pleasure; sometimes with a feeling like envy of the vegetative, and almost, as it seemed, passive beings which occupied its humanized portions:—often, too often, with the thought how happy could she have been to trace such scenes, with one from whom she was now separated by an insurmountable barrier, or how contented she could have been in the humblest of them, had she been permitted to love him there. Once, and once only during her drive, was her reverie interrupted by Mr. Bouverie. Nothing had passed between them but the morning salutations: whether he was struck with the melancholy of her countenance, and kindly wished to divert her

thoughts, or whether, inspirited by the exhilarating nature of the excursion, he forgot his feigned coldness to her, cannot be determined. He hung back, however, from his party, and pointed out to her admiration a prospect of moderate extent, but of great beauty. Mr. Kilderby drew up his horse, and they stopped to admire it.

“Now for your pencil, Miss Courtenay,” said he.

“And for your verse, Mr. Kilderby,” she replied.

“I should like much to have a drawing of it,” said Mr. Bouverie, as he began to ride away.

“I wish I had time to draw one for you,” cried Constance.

He turned, and smiled, and his countenance glowed with an animation which had not been observed there for some time. At length, after winding round a magnificent park, they reached the house, a stately pile, standing upon a gentle eminence, commanding a prospect of the towering thickets, and majestic avenues, which characterize the demesnes of our English nobility.

Dr. Clayton, with his hands behind him, was pacing up and down a colonnade, which fronted the house. He was followed by Mr. Collins, who appeared to be trying to pacify him for the delay of a few minutes beyond the appointed time, of which the Newberry party were accused. His words, however, albeit delivered with tone of pretended charity, appeared to have the effect of increasing the Doctor's irritation.

"It is all that Jane Monckton—don't talk to me of her precision and stuff: I hate an old maid—she is an abomination unto me: can there be a more splenetic, ferocious, ungovernable—"

"What is that you are saying, Doctor?" cried Miss Monckton, who was stepping out of her carriage just as the Doctor's voice was raised to a climax: but Dr. Clayton was too much afraid of her to finish his sentence: he walked up and held out his hand to assist her, with a "Madam!" uttered in a tone of suppressed passion, and looking as if he could have bitten her.

"We are in very good time, I think," said Miss Monckton, confidently. No one contradicted her.

“ I am glad we have not had to wait for you Doctor—where’s Mrs. Clayton ?”

“ At the—devil, for what I know !” replied the Doctor, bursting with rage.

“ Nay, then, you take very bad care of her,” rejoined the spinster coolly.

“ Will it please you, madam, to join her ?” said the Doctor, holding out his hand ; but, as she did not immediately accept it, he turned into the house, muttering the words, “ presumptuous, intolerable, saucy, unreasonable, impertinent,” which Mr. Collins was near enough to hear, and to repeat for the benefit of the company. Mr. Kilderby was bustling up to be introduced to the great man, when this little breeze occurred. Every one declined to be the herald to announce the name of the author of “ Clorintha.”

“ Wait till after dinner, my good sir,” said Mr. Wakley, kindly.

“ Wait till he’s in good humour,” added Mrs. De Courcy.

“ But that may not happen for these ten days,” interposed Miss Monckton.

“The Doctor is always kind,” said his satellite in ordinary.

“He is out of hearing, Mr. Collins,” observed Miss Monckton.

“Mr. Bamford, will give us his advice,” said Miss Pearson, as that worthy man made his appearance.

Now, “Jack,” although he had been a beau at five and twenty, had become a sloven at forty. He was a sort of man who looked like an ill-stuffed pincushion. You might have suspected that the wadding which composed him, was coming out at sundry crevices in his dress. His knees seemed ready to burst the restraint of his inexpressibles: his shirt frills were twice the usual breadth; at least they appeared to be so; and the world libelled him, if he wore a clean cravat every day; at any rate it had evidently been carefully tumbled in putting it on. His hair was long and uncultured; his hands never of the cleanest; and though when Mr. Bamford had his surplice on, (which covering a multitude of defects,) he was regarded as a personable sort of man, yet without it, even his

servants were apt to say that he got into his clothes by accident. With all this, his countenance expressed so much benevolence, that it was impossible to look at him without being inspired with kindly feelings. Mr. Bamford set the whole party at their ease at once. He advanced, and tucked Miss Monckton's arm under his—consigned the two Miss Courtenays to Mr. Bouverie, begged Mr. Wakley to take good care of Mrs. De Courcy, and left Miss Pearson to Dr. Creamly. They soon overtook the Doctor, who was walking, with pondering step, through the splendid apartments, only pausing occasionally, to give a character, faithful or not, according to his humour, of any remarkable divine, or distinguished politician, whose portraits might be hanging on the walls. All the company stood around in awful silence, whilst he bespattered the memory of Archbishop Laud with abuse, or praised that of Oliver Cromwell, administering the flattering unction of well rounded periods of panegyric, with a liberality proportionate to his affection for the one party, or his detestation for the other, to which these great men severally belonged.

“ He lays it on, not with a camel-hair pencil, but with a mason’s trowel,” whispered Miss Monckton to Mr. Bamford.

The Doctor heard her say something, and turned sternly round towards her, he said solemnly, “ Jane Monckton, thou art mischievous.”

“ It is an old maid’s privilege, Doctor.”

“ Come along with me, thou malapert, and I will teach thee to be wise, if thy nature will permit it,” returned the divine—“ John, Jack, take thou Miss Courtenay.”

“ I will part with neither of my companions, unless they wish to leave me,” said Mr. Bouverie. Both the young ladies stood still.

“ And who are you, sir?” said the Doctor to Mr. Kilderby, who stood conspicuously before the rest, half bowing; his blue eye glazed with anxiety, a hectic flush upon his face, and his hair raised like the crest of a cockatoo when irritated.

“ He looks as if he had accidentally escaped from the paradise of fools,” whispered Miss Monckton slyly to Mr. Bamford.

But that worthy personage, with a few little orthodox vices and self-indulgences, with

a Catholic fondness for the bottle and a true Protestant relish of roast beef, had one Christian virtue in an eminent degree; it was that virtue which, practised on a large scale, we call charity, and when exercised in small matters, we term good-nature. He stepped out of the easy sort of slumbering state, in which, standing or sitting, or doing any thing but eating, he seemed ever to be, to relieve the stranger from the attacks of the *ursa major* of the group.

“ This gentleman, Doctor, is Mr. Kilderby, from Bath; who, without your profound knowledge of genealogy, I can introduce to you confidently as a gentleman of a most honourable name and house; and what is much more, as one who adorns his name and race by literature, and—and——”

“ Poetry,” whispered Mr. Kilderby; “ tell him that—by a love for poetical studies.”

“ This gentleman, Doctor, wishes to lay the wild flowers which he has culled from Parnassus by the laurels—the laurels, Doctor, which you have carried away from Porson, from Burney, and——”

“ Excellent fellow,” said the Doctor, who

had been chuckling during the whole of this speech, and who now broke out into an open effervescence of delight at Jack's unwonted eloquence.

"Mr. Kilderby, I am proud of the honour of knowing you. Mind that you send me your works."

"Most readily, most readily," returned the poet, in a paroxysm of pleasure. "Miss Monckton, have you that volume with you? The learned and reverend Doctor will, perhaps——"

"No, sir; I never read English verse when I am with Jack. Jack, sir, is a scholar—a very able man, sir; and though, as you see, a little uncouth in his appearance, not slighted by the muses. Advance, John Bamford, and this worthy gentleman poet and I will talk of thy merits as we go along."

"Remember, Doctor, that we dine at four," said Mr. Bamford, fumbling out a watch, the only orderly thing about his person.

"And now, ladies, let me show you this room—the dining-room of my invaluable patron and friend, the Marquis of ——; a charming

summer room, a most comfortable winter apartment. Comfort, as well as splendour, is the order of this house. The next room, ladies, is the library. The Doctor will tell you that you were best to walk out of it, but I know that ladies are great scholars. Miss Courtenay, do you like these marbles? Mr. Bouverie, what do you think of this binding? Our next object of investigation is the great hall—and great indeed it is. Miss Emily, what are you peeping into? my excellent and old friend, Mrs. Martin, the housekeeper, will lock you up if you go in there. Well! I protest Miss Courtenay is encouraging her sister, and Mr. Bouverie countenances these proceedings. He is soon out again, and so is Miss Emily; but where is Miss Courtenay? O, here she is. Why, Miss Courtenay, we thought you had run away with the vicar.”

“I shall not forbid the bans,” whispered Miss Monckton.

“Nor I,” returned Mr. Bamford; “they are mightily suited to each other, and Bouverie ought to marry. I thought it was to have been last year.”

“Why, no; they have not yet settled it themselves, so I think we need not be in too great a hurry.”

“They will have my hearty good wishes,” rejoined Mr. Bamford. “Bouvere is a fine fellow, and has but one fault—he is no bottle companion.”

“Why, certainly, in a clergyman,” replied Miss Monckton, “that is a heavy failing. He ought to drink for the whole church militant. However, you have not many complaints upon that score; you are pretty well off, I think.”

“Degenerating, my gentle friend. I am no friend to aqueous company. I never knew a water drinker a good neighbour. Spiritual pride besets such workers against human nature. But this Bouverie carries his faculties so meekly, that one must pardon him, even this infirmity.”

“That is extremely liberal, considering what a very good example you set him,” returned Miss Monckton.

“Why I should not treat the fellow so leniently,” said Mr. Bamford stopping short, as if to exculpate himself for a dereliction from

his principles; "but that I like him. I can say of him, Miss Monckton, as Addison hath written of Somers—"He knows not what it is to wrangle on indifferent points, to triumph in the superiority of his understanding; to be supercilious in the cause of truth."

"This is high praise," returned Miss Monckton, "and I only wish Miss Courtenay could hear you apply it to Mr. Bouverie."

They then joined the rest of the party, who were standing in a little group, in the centre of which stood Dr. Clayton and Mr. Kilderby, like a lion and a lap-dog.

"Come hither, Jack," exclaimed the divine as he saw Mr. Bamford; "thou only hast a head worth applying to: Henry Bouverie is shuffling and sidling about Herberts and Marchmonts, tell me if that old dark-faced scoundrel there be not one of the Marchmonts;" pointing, as he spoke, to a picture some hundred years old, which hung in the spacious lobby in which they were standing.

"It is John, the son of Sir Charles Marchmont, in Oliver's time, the great uncle of Philip who served under Marlborough, the great-

grandfather to Anne, Marchioness of ——, and thus great great-grandfather to Henrietta and Sarah, co-heiresses of John Earl of Bridgeton, and by that line ——”

“ True, true, thou hast made the matter clear ; then thus stands the relationship between those Marchmonts and thy patron, Edward fourth Marquis ——”

“ Aye, but there was a relationship between Emily, third Marchioness, and sole heiress of ——”

“ I have it—enough,” said the Doctor, putting his finger to his nose.

—— “ And there is likely further to be a new alliance between the present holder of the title, Sir Charles Marchmont, and Harriet sole daughter and heiress of Lord Vallefors, and great-niece, by her mother’s side, to my right honourable patron.”

“ And hath not the young Baronet a touch of Marchmont blood within him ? A smack of the old leaven, a little wildfire in him ?” asked the Doctor.

Constance felt it to be kindly meant, that Mr. Bouverie, at this moment, directed her attention to a fine landscape of Poussin, which hung on

the opposite side of the room, and gently led her to it. She heard not, therefore, the reply of Mr. Bamford, but as she stood, gazing on the picture which she scarcely saw, she caught the words,

“Courteous—high-spirited,—accomplished—
—ready of wit,—easy of access,—but infirm of
purpose.”

She withdrew from her companion, and leaned her head out of the window, to recover herself, whilst looking on the magnificent prospect below. In spite of herself, some tears dropped on the casement. She wiped them hastily away, and turned to rejoin her companions: they were all gone, except Mr. Bouverie, who was lingering near her, apparently absorbed in inspecting some pictures. He offered her his arm, without appearing to notice the scarcely repressed tears which still moistened her eyes, and whilst he gently drew her on, conversed so kindly, but so calmly, and led her so delicately and so judiciously to subjects, which, by imperceptibly exercising her understanding, changed the current of her ideas, that before she reached Mr. Bamford’s parsonage, her countenance had an air of serenity, if not of happiness.

“He pities me,” thought she to herself, “and well he may: and he is so generous and good, that I can bear his pity. O that he would but marry Emily!”

They reached Alverston parsonage a little after the rest of the party had entered to dress for dinner. It was a convenient residence, contiguous to a small neat town, yet not within the scope of that din of population, which can only be endurable when heard at a considerable distance. A massive, and picturesque church, stood, as it were, the guardian of the humble parsonage house, to which the foot-approach was commonly through the churchyard. The garden, indeed, joined that sacred enclosure, and the flowers of Mr. Bamford’s rearing, branching over the slender fence, cast their sweets on some of the graves. The house was a compact, whitened building, in winter clothed with the pyracanthus, and its scarlet berries, in summer mantled by the jessamine, and the Austrian rose. The pleasure-ground was small, and extended on the side opposite to the churchyard, to a winding river, of classical, rather than of navigable importance, as Mr. Bamford loved

to observe, for he was an enemy to the encroachment of trade upon the simplicity of rural life. A ferry boat, for there was no other bridge than a hand rail, lay within view, almost embowered in willows, and at some distance, rising amid massive elms, stood the proud mansion of Mr. Bamford's worthy and right honourable patron, whose health he never failed to drink at his own table, after dinner, as regularly as he took his wine;—and the toast was never omitted.

“ Mr. Bamford must be very happy here,” remarked Constance, as she stood for a moment, amid the unstudied luxuriance of flowers, now called forth into bloom by the genial warmth of an early spring.

“ Yes, his brother lives with him, so that he is not alone,” replied her companion, after a short pause, and with something very like a sigh. This was dangerous ground to both of them—Constance felt inclined to sigh too.

“ I shall be late for dinner,” she said, hastily withdrawing her arm from Mr. Bouverie, and hurrying into the house. She entered by a garden glass door, and as the maids were busily assisting in preparing dinner, she saw no one to direct

her where to proceed. She took the liberty, therefore, of knocking at a door, which she fancied, from a sort of stir within, might belong to a housekeeper's room. In an instant it was opened, a gruff voice saying, "Nancy, is it you?" and a very short, stout man, with black hair combed straight down, his hands covered with flour, and a large white cook's apron on, made his appearance. Constance concluded that it was a cook, or some person in that capacity, and asked him to be so kind as to tell her where she could find one of the maid servants.

"Nancy, Nancy," shouted the unknown, and retreating with extreme dispatch into his sanctum, he shut the door. Nancy, with rosy, glossy cheeks, and untied cap, came running in some trepidation; she "had only been tidying herself, and was sorry the lady should catch Mr. Robert in the roughs."

"And who is Mr. Robert?" asked Constance, as she followed the young woman up stairs.

"He is my master, the squire, Mr. John's elder brother," replied Nancy, as she ushered Miss Courtenay into the bed-room. Constance

related her adventure to Miss Monckton and Emily, who were dressing.

“ So you have seen Mr. Robert Bamford,” said Miss Monckton, making the melted butter, no doubt, as is his custom upon grand occasions, for he can find no one fit to execute so important a part of the dinner ; and having led a miserable life for some years, as he told me himself, seeing that article brought to table either running about upon people’s plates like so much milk and water, or thick as hasty pudding, he took the composition of it into his own hands.”

“ Good heavens !” said Constance, as she began to arrange her dress, “ was he brought up to be a cook ?”

“ O no ; but he was born a natural. He has the money, the parson the wit ; and between the two, you will find their dinners very agreeable. Robert answers no earthly purpose but to eat himself, and to be the cause of eating in others. John was too long at Oxford not to know something about these matters ; but he is more convivial than gastronomic. The clergy learn that along with their divinity : but

come, Constance, you will never be dressed for dinner."

They descended to the drawing room, and found the whole party assembled, with the addition of two elderly spinsters, natives of the place, "virtuous ladies," as Doctor Clayton called them, who having been long appropriated to the two Mr. Bamfords, had to-day forgotten their scruples to dine at the Parsonage in consideration of their friend, Mrs. Clayton, and their sister in celibacy, Miss Monckton, dining there also. These ladies were attired in white transparent muslin, rigidly alike, and in wigs of the most candid description. Had it not been for their summits, as Mr. Wakley remarked, they might have been compared to the two alabaster figures on each side of the chimney-piece. "We have two pair of charming sisters," observed Mr. Bamford, gallantly, as the Miss Courtenays entered the room—"then in an under tone—"dates rather different."

"And now, Doctor, and my worthy friends, to dinner: my brother is in the drawing-room," said he, as they entered that apartment, and saw the Squire at the head of the table. Mr.

Robert had been decantering the wine, and marshalling the dishes; he had greatly altered his attire since Constance saw him; having assumed a white waistcoat of spotless hue, and ample length, showing to the fullest advantage the portly front of the wearer; whilst his new blue coat and bright metal buttons had the greater success in the eyes of the fair, as the rest of the gentlemen were all in black. His napkin was ready tucked up, and he appeared quite ready for the warfare. Dr. Clayton seemed equally disposed to do justice to the dinner. He set to as resolutely as if he had been demolishing a polemical adversary, and slackened not the attack until the first course had disappeared. Then he was quite in his element, having three varieties of the genus sycophantia around him. There was Mr. Collins, who did regular duty in that way, and from whom a certain number of services were expected; to him was added Mr. Kilderby, whose incense to a great man was in the style of a dedication, in the days of dedications, when direct and unblushing adulation was ex-

pected by the great, the powerful, and the learned. Then came Dr. Creamly, who paid a tribute to genius in every look and word; flattered, when he only seemed to agree,—so convinced of, so penetrated with the superiority of others, did he seem at all times to feel. To counterbalance these, there was the unassuming, but independent Mr. Bouverie, who said a thing simply because he thought it, and maintained his opinion calmly, but unflinchingly. Then there was the Doctor's attached, but not blind nor cringing friend, Mr. Bamford, who, when he could spare time from concerns of such paramount importance as excavating the pigeons from a pie, or anatomizing a chicken, sometimes opposed the Doctor in politics, or even differed from him in a reference. Lastly, there was the meek, but indiscreet Robert, who, knowing himself to be a Squire, and not knowing himself to be a simpleton, was rash enough to attack the great lion of the country on his own ground, to risk bold assertions, and to provoke the Doctor, if possible, to single combat. These sallies met with little attention at first—"Robert, Robert,

I spare thee for Johannes' sake."—"Robert, Robert, talk not of what wiser men would let alone." And when he began to be impatient under repeated interruptions—"Robert, Robert, thy beef and mutton are excellent: we care not to know if thy brains be likewise of prime quality;" whilst Mr. John Bamford, who, with the kindness of an affectionate nature, was anxious to save his brother from mortification, or exposure, endeavoured to divert the Squire from the unequal contest, and to allay the irritation which the presumption of the simple Robert excited in the Doctor.

After a due and lady-like enjoyment of the faultless cheer presented to them, distributed by Mr. Robert, swelling and puffing like a well shaken feather-bed at the top of the table, and Mr. John labouring at the lower end with real zeal, his dress becoming looser and looser, and his waistcoat unbuttoning of its own accord with his exertions, the female part of the company withdrew. They were very soon followed by Mr. Bouverie, who was obliged to return to Newberry early that evening, on account

of some clerical matters, whilst Dr. and Mrs. Clayton, Miss Monckton and her two friends, were to remain all night. It was still daylight, and some of the ladies were inclined for a walk. Mrs. De Courcy and Miss Pearson who had been together all dinner-time, gave themselves airs, and would not go. Miss Monckton, Constance, Emily, and Miss Collins, agreed to stroll a little way, across the water, to see a view of Alverston Hall, which Mr. Bouverie was to show them at a certain point. His horse was at the door, and his servant ordered to follow him; and after he had forded the river, he dismounted, and walked beside the ladies who honoured him with their company. The promised prospect had been shown, and the young Vicar reluctantly mounted his horse, and prepared to bid them good night. Just as he was on the point of pronouncing that unwelcome word, Emily, pointing to a branch of hawthorn, then budding, requested him to reach it for her—he was only too ready to oblige her, and extending his arm to the object of her wishes, at the same moment, his horse, high-bred, and

somewhat too well fed at Alverston Parsonage, took fright at the approach of a flock of sheep. He set off with great velocity, and Mr. Bouverie, who was usually an excellent horseman, having lost his balance in the act of reaching the flower, was precipitated on the ground with alarming force. As he was light, though tall and agile, the fall might have been of little consequence, had he not struck against a paling. He was unable to rise, and his countenance was marked by an expression of acute pain. Those who have witnessed accidents, can tell how much more awful the instant change from health to helplessness is, than the gradual decay of strength by illness, and how completely the inexperienced are often unnerved by such sights. The alarm of the ladies who were present seemed to render them motionless, and Constance was the first to recover her self-possession: she flung her shawl on the hand-rail to facilitate her exertions, and ran swiftly towards the town. She paused not till she found herself in the market place, and looking round, saw the names of several medical practitioners near.

“ Mr. Gulson, surgeon, &c. ; prescriptio accurately prepared,” struck her eye ; she rushed into the shop, overset a child who was playing there, knocked her foot against a pestle and mortar, and plunged into a back parlour where Mr. Gulson and his wife sat at tea. Constance literally seized him by the shoulders.

“ Come, come, for heaven’s sake !” she cried. “ O no ! do not wait for your hat, but follow me.”

“ I never move without my lancet and scarifier, madam—Couldn’t sleep without them under my pillow : Mrs. Gulson knows that. My dear, if Mrs. Dixon sends, say, I shall be back soon.—And now, madam, where are we going ? not on a fool’s errand, I hope.”

“ Follow me, follow me,” was all that Constance could say. But though she had made her way to the market-place, she found herself unable, being totally ignorant of the place, to retrace her steps to the spot where the accident had happened. She therefore deemed it necessary, after turning down one street and looking up another, to ask directions from Mr. Gulson.

“With great pleasure, madam, if you will but tell me where I am to go. Just now, you know, I was to follow, and now I am to lead—he, he, he!” for this gentleman was a bit of a wag. Constance briefly informed him who it was that had met with the accident, and that she was staying at Mr. Bamford’s house. His manner instantly changed to the deepest respect.

“Indeed I am extremely concerned,” said he, “only happy to think that you found me at home,” he continued, breathless from following her rapid steps—“it is well, madam, “that you did not go to my opposite neighbour, a worthy good man, but nothing of an operator—saw him myself once begin to amputate, madam, without drawing up the cutis.”

“Good heavens! but I hope there will be no occasion for any thing of that sort here,” exclaimed Constance, stopping for an instant.

“Don’t know—never can tell till we see—amputated an arm myself yesterday—neatest operation I ever saw—scarce half-a-pint of blood lost—prostration of strength not great—arteries taken up—patient safe in bed in half an hour. Admirable cicatrix,” pursued he, talking very fast,

for their walk had not become a run, but he thought he must give the lady what consolation he could. But Constance, a little overcome by fatigue and apprehension, was silent until they reached the groupe.

Mr. Bouverie was sitting upon the bank, and though there was a forced smile upon his lips, his appearance denoted great pain. Emily had gone to the Parsonage to fetch Mr. Bouverie's servant, and had just returned; but, at Mr. Bouverie's request, had forbore to give the alarm to any member of the family—a precaution in which Miss Monckton coincided, for she well knew how much the bustle of such occasions adds to the annoyance, and sometimes to the mischief of an accident.

“ I have brought him, I have brought a surgeon,” cried Constance, running up to the party, and bending down to the sufferer, she said in a tone of deep concern, “ I fear you are in great pain; tell me if you know where you are hurt.”

“ The injury I have received is of no consequence,” replied Mr. Bouverie, looking earnestly at her as she knelt on the grass beside him;

“ I am no great surgeon, but I think my shoulder is dislocated.”

“ We shall soon be able to tell you, sir,” said Mr. Gulson, who came up, his hat in his hand, bowing and wiping his face at the same time, and tucking up his coat above the wrists. “ How are the legs, sir? Can you stand?”

“ O yes.”

“ Come, that’s well—not like my friend the mayor, who had a compound fracture of the thigh-bone last week, in a fall from his chaise; but then he was half seas over, and that don’t seem to be the case with you. How move the arms? Let us have off the coat.—Ladies, perhaps you may choose to withdraw; but ’tis only the coat, ladies.”

“ O!” said Constance, tenderly, “ now he hurts you very much, I fear.”

“ Hum!—a little shrinking indeed; there is dislocation if not fracture—awkward job this—Don’t be alarmed, ladies; if you will right about to the house, and send a carriage for this good gentleman, I’ll make him strait in a trice. Do not fret, madam,” for Miss Monckton was a little overcome. “ You are this gentleman’s

mother, I presume.—Well, ma'am, your son shall soon be as whole as he ever was.—Young man, come this way."

"What are they going to do to him?" asked Emily, with a face of horror, as they walked towards the Parsonage.

"Only to put his shoulder in," replied Miss Monckton, shuddering.

"Miss Collins, you seem to be quite overcome," said Constance to Agnes, who was giving vent to a private burst of tears.

"Only that it reminds me of an accident that my father had last summer," answered the young lady; "but I am sure, Miss Courtenay, Mr. Bouverie must be everlastingly indebted to you," and here her tears flowed afresh, "for getting medical assistance for him so quickly." She spoke in a tone of chagrin, and Constance good-naturedly replied,

"But you had the satisfaction of assisting him to bear his accident, and of keeping up his spirits till we did arrive."

"O no! he was very impatient till Mr. Gulson and you came back; and then he said, 'I could not think where Miss Courtenay was

gone, but now I see that she has been, like a guardian angel, seeking for relief for me.'"

"I am very glad that I found it so soon," said Constance, colouring deeply.

"This will make a fine story for Newberry," observed Miss Collins, as they entered the house.

Miss Monckton undertook to make all the necessary arrangements, and apprizing Mrs. Clayton only of what had happened, every thing was quietly contrived. The gentlemen were still, indeed, at the dinner-table, and the scent of the Doctor's pipe, his occasional laugh, and a loud burst from the rest of the company, seemed to intimate that they would not leave their seats for some time—at least not so long as they were able to retain them. In the course of half an hour, Mr. Bouverie was safely brought to the Parsonage, and, supported between Mr. Gulson and his servant, was able to walk into Mr. Bamford's well-aired library, where a large chair redolent of ease seemed to invite the weary or the sick, not only to repose, but to a downright slumber. Reclining, and supported by

pillows, Mr. Bouverie, although not free from pain, began to taste the luxury of female sympathy and attendance. Mrs. Clayton, with unobtrusive kindness, placed a large screen between him and the fire of Kennel coal, prepared for one who, loving all good things, loved a good fire in particular, although the season had now emerged from the "sear and yellow leaf." Miss Monckton drew out an ottoman for his feet, Emily looked kindly at him, and Mr. Gulsion fidgetted about, remarking that the ladies took good care of Mr. Bouverie, and dropping out anon some of his restorative drops which might do wonders, combined with the tender regards of the fair, and in particular those of his tender mother, "this elderly lady," added he, pointing to Miss Monckton. The whole party smiled, and Emily and Mr. Bouverie laughed outright.

"Nay, but I thought there was a family likeness," said the man of science hesitatingly, for he prided himself always on seeing exactly how matters stood.

"I should be only too proud of such a mother,"

observed the young Vicar, "had I not already a tie of that most endearing nature in one of the most beloved of parents."

"You are in pain," said Constance, anxiously seeing an expression almost of anguish pass across his face as he spoke. "This cushion hurts you, does it not?" said she, gently pressing one of the supports away from his shoulder. Her voice, her look, and manner, habitually soft and kind, were at this moment earnest, and almost affectionate. Her solicitude was not thrown away upon the object of it; and, for the first time, he ventured to fix his eyes upon her with a look expressive of all that he felt.

"No, indeed; nothing hurts me now," he replied, in a low tone, whilst a flush of strong emotion passed across his pale forehead. Constance felt the import of his manner, in its fullest extent; for the woman who has once received addresses of love, can never again be insensible to the indications of that passion. She drew back with a feeling something like remorse, for she perceived that she was misunderstood,

and the kindness of her grateful nature mistaken for an interest which she could not bestow. Miss Monckton, who saw, from a slight distance, this little scene, said internally,

“ We are getting on, I think ; Sir Charles is for once forgotten.”

Emily, who felt too much anxiety for her favourite, Mr. Bouverie, to be surprised that Constance should express a similar feeling, thought nothing of it ; and Mr. Gulson and Mrs. Clayton were too much engaged in discussing the comparative merits of embrocations and fomentations, the former being stoutly upheld by Mr. Gulson, to regard the discourse of others.

By dint of feminine address, Dr. Clayton, the uproarious Robert, and the crew of Collins and Wakley, were prevented from intruding upon the patient that evening ; and it was agreed that Mrs. Clayton, the two elderly spinsters, and one of the young ladies, should make tea for them in the drawing-room.

“ Which of you three nymphs will go with me ?” asked Mrs. Clayton, looking archly at Constance, who sat retired from general observa-

tion in silence and thought. Constance and Agnes Collins came forward, each evidently desirous not to appear anxious to stay.

Emily sat still.

“ Well, you must cast lots, I suppose; I know not how to choose between you. Miss Courtenay is a vast favourite with the Doctor; but Agnes Collins can manage better with the gentlemen. So you will not go, Miss Courtenay,” pursued she, as Constance drew back with a slight shudder, for the thoughts of their obstreperous, and perhaps coarse revelry, disgusted her.

“ Come, Mr. Bouverie, do you decide,” said Mrs. Clayton.

“ O, it is impossible for me to choose,” replied Mr. Bouverie, addressing Mrs. Clayton, but casting an imploring glance at Constance.

“ We will not part the sisters then.—Adieu, dear trio,” cried Mrs. Clayton, as she led the reluctant Agnes away.

“ Poor Agnes would rather remain with us,” observed Emily, as the two ladies left the apartment.

“ We are very happy here, are we not, Mr.

Bouverie?" remarked Miss Monckton, as she drew her chair near that of the Vicar. "Constance, take this chair.—Emily, come here; I love to have my two *children* near me; for since Mr. Gulson will insist upon my assuming the maternal character, I choose these as my offspring.—Constance, wherefore so pensive? Mr. Bouverie will give you absolution for all your sins, for your quizzing Mr. Robert, and your flirting with Mr. John."

"But he cannot," answered Constance, "absolve me from those sins of which he is not aware, and which are known only to my own conscience."

"And what are those?" asked the Vicar, timidly.

"Inconsistency, want of self-government, recklessness of consequences, duplicity even," replied Constance, blushing deeply, and looking down.

All the party were silent for a few minutes, nor could Mr. Bouverie divert his gaze from the ambiguous countenance of her in whom, unhappily, every wish of his heart was bound up. Perplexed by her varying conduct

towards him, harassed by doubts, excited by fleeting hopes, devotedly attached, yet too delicate and high-minded to obtrude his wishes where they might be obnoxious to her whom he loved, he felt that he had “ cast his bread upon the waters,” and that he must abide the current which he could not stem. Religious trust, the pervading sentiment of his mind, came however to aid him in the uncertainties and agitation of an unrequited attachment ; and whilst he associated the pure and lovely object of his affections with his highest hopes, he felt that object sanctified by such an association, and the emotions which she inspired, hallowed by the reference of all his hopes to the Supreme Being, his heavenly Father : “ Thou can’st give, O God !” he said, in secret : “ thou mayst withhold ! But O ! spare me the anguish, unless it be thy holy will to chasten and prove me ; and heavy will be the chastening—and stern the proof—of seeing her consigned to another.” Such were the reflections of Mr. Bouverie as he laid his head upon the pillow, and thought with mingled ecstasy and despair of all the varying events of the day.

CHAPTER VII.

Love, who shall say that thou art not
The dearest blessing of our lot ?
Yet, not the less, who may deny
Life has no sorrow like thy sigh ?

L. E. L.

THE little party in Mr. Bamford's dressing-room were not, however, allowed to separate for the night, without a visit from Mr. Kilderby. How he came to venture, was matter of some surprise, for Mr. Gulson, who was one of those good people who think a little falsehood of no great harm, provided it be not discovered, had really given a hint that Mr. Bouverie was asleep. Accordingly, the worthy widower took the precaution of leaving his shoes in the passage, and crept softly to the door, and peeping in, his large blue eyes dilated, and his face glowing

with the excitement of recent revels ; he might, had he lived some centuries before, have been mistaken for a jester, escaped from a feast, to play his antics in some more remote corner. The question, “ May I come in ? ” was answered reluctantly by Miss Monckton, “ To be sure, Mr. Kilderby.”

Thus encouraged, he stepped forward upon tip-toe, exclaiming as he advanced, “ My good friends, this is a sad disaster ; but it might have been worse :—God bless my soul ! I am really quite alarmed—but you will see that my muse has not been silent in your service. *Voila un impromptu*, made at table, on hearing of your calamity.

“ When Bouverie to earth descended——”

“ Nay,” cried Miss Monckton, “ let him dislocate his shoulder peaceably, and in his own way, without the talking of those old maids, the Muses, who have nothing to do with the business at all. Besides, my good sir, remember the danger of exciting his mind so much. Verses, such as——”

“ You are too flattering ; ” interrupted Mr.

Kilderby, "but indeed, ladies, I have had enough to overset this poor brain to-day; that is, if I had as large a share of vanity as poets are generally supposed to possess:—but I am no coxcomb, and, as my worthy friend Creamly says, only too negligent of my fame—too indifferent to what the world calls celebrity. But things will out, somehow or other. I am really ashamed to tell you, Miss Courtenay, but you will hear of it, no doubt, how Dr. Clayton called up my poor productions, and was pleased to describe me, as one born with a distich in his mouth, and likely to expire with an epic in his thoughts. Then I am sure, it makes me blush to repeat the high encomiums of Mr. Wakley, who declared that when Burns and Goldsmith would be forgotten, the author of *Clorintha* would be read. What do you think of that, Miss Emily?"

"Why, I think it will be a long time before Burns and Goldsmith are forgotten," replied she, with great simplicity.

"No doubt! But it's very gratifying to have a chance of stepping into their shoes, as it were."

"Ah, my dear sir," said Miss Monckton, as

she took up a candle, "'tis just as if Mr. Robert Bamford, our worthy host, were to put on your shoes, which you have left at the door—they would not fit him ; neither would those of Burns, or Goldsmith, suit you. And so good night to you."

It was not until the middle of the ensuing day, that Miss Monckton, Mr. Kilderby, and the Miss Courtenays left the rectory. Mr. Gulson had positively enjoined Mr. Bouverie to remain where he was, and, therefore, beheld him, with the utmost surprise, dressed and at breakfast, on the very morning after his accident. Still more did he wonder, when Mr. Bouverie, thanking him warmly for his timely aid, announced his intention of returning to Newberry that morning, and looking at Miss Monckton said, "Perhaps I can prevail upon some of my Newberry friends to occupy a part of my chaise, if they are not afraid of some fatality attending my transit from this place." He spoke timidly, and the varying expression of his countenance was marked by the kind-hearted Mr. Bamford, who came to his aid.

"Since the Doctor," said he, looking at Mrs.

Clayton, “ has ordered, to my infinite regret, his carriage at ten, I purpose having the pleasure of accompanying Miss Emily Courtenay on horseback to Newberry, and perhaps making most desperate love to her by the way. What say you to that, Miss Courtenay ?”

“ That I am resolved to intercept the *tête-à-tête*, by riding with you myself,” replied Constance. “ Emily will be a far more cheerful companion for Miss Monckton, and—”

Miss Monckton gave her an angry look, accompanied by other signals of displeasure.

“ Well,” resumed Mr. Bamford, “ we shall be very happy either way—and my friend here, Mr. Kilderby, can make due advances in the gig to the favour of Miss Collins. I will now go, and order out, Miss Courtenay, my finest horse to do you honour.”

It was past noon before the party were ready to set out, and it was then arranged that Mr. Kilderby’s chariot should convey the invalid, and that Mrs. De Courcy and Miss Pearson should occupy the chaise. Mr. Gulson, indefatigable with his drops, and his embrocations, to the last, conducted Mr. Bouverie, and placed him in the

carriage, with the same care and nicety as if he had been packing a piece of china. Mr. Kilderby and Miss Collins, neither of them in very good humour, ascended the gig. Agnes, who was shrewd and satirical, hated and despised him. Her keen sense of ridicule prevented her from appreciating the gentleness of his character. "He is just harmless," she remarked, "and that is the best that you can say of him." Influenced by this dislike, and perhaps by softer feelings to another object, Miss Collins journeyed homewards in no very harmonious mood, nor could she be persuaded to relax her features to a smile, even though the words, "rhythm," "melody," "tuneful quire," "bard of Bath," and other soft allusions, dropped incessantly from the lips of her companion. Constance, on the other hand, was more than usually happy with her reverend escort. Well mounted, but ill-dressed, as Mr. Bamford was, in outward appearance this couple assimilated not; but, in heart and mind, they were in most respects congenial. Benevolent and confiding, yet discerning in the ways of man, and even of woman, the worthy old bachelor admired Miss Courtenay

somewhat for her beauty, much for her simple, yet polished manners, but most for the unsophisticated evidences of an enthusiastic, yet feminine mind, which appeared in her conversation.

They rode along, something more rapidly than the chaise, yet stopping from time to time to wait for the vehicle, and to make kindly inquiries of the sufferer within. Often did the heart of that individual bound within him, as Constance, radiant with health and animation, anxiously sought to hear how he bore his ride. Internally he rejoiced at the accident, which had produced, as he thought, such inestimable proofs of regard and interest; and Mr. Bamford, Miss Monckton, and even Emily, began to feel assured that Sir Charles was wholly forgotten. But these hopes were destined to be disappointed. As he regained health and vigour, Mr. Bouverie lost the gleam of happiness which had illumined his path. The interest which Constance felt was that of kindness, and it expired with its cause. It is true, that she ceased to evince towards Mr. Bouverie those variations of manner, and those alternations of friend-

ship and reserve which had once marked her conduct towards him ; but a settled courtesy and friendship were far more hopeless than the fluctuations of kindness and of petulance. Often did he relapse into a state little short of despair, when he found her tranquil, indeed, but consistently indifferent to him and to all men : for some time, however, he seemed resolved to keep up sedulously the pursuit which he had ventured to begin. He sought the society of the sisters in every possible manner. He entered into their pursuits with a zest which only love can give ; he dwelt upon each little circumstance of their unvaried lives with a fond minuteness, which made it apparent, at least to Emily, that his heart was concerned in the business. He endeavoured to become necessary to their enjoyments, by promoting the studies which they preferred, or seeking for them the means of recreation which they desired. The latest publications, the choicest works, were at their command ; the freshest flowers were culled, as subjects for their pencils ; the finest views discovered, when they wandered with their sketch-books, to extend and prosecute their

studies from nature. But all this solicitude was fruitless; Constance neither sought nor forbade his attentions; she received them, indeed, with gratitude, but it was the gratitude of principle, and not of affection. Her enjoyment of nature, of literature, and of art, was totally unconnected with any thought of him. It seemed too, that they were now dissevered from any recollection of another object; yet sometimes the deep, though broken sigh, and the unbidden tear, unperceived perhaps, except by one, to whom love had taught watchfulness, awoke the suspicion that some regrets, mitigated by time, and subdued by reflection, still absorbed the mind of one, who seemed born to love and be beloved. The natural consequence of this condition of things is obvious: Mr. Bouverie, who had too much delicacy of mind not to know what was due to himself, found it necessary, for his own peace, to withdraw from a pursuit so hopeless. He might deem it necessary for his own peace, but unhappily, the determined avoidance which he now resolved upon did not contribute to ensure his tranquillity. In spite of a strong, and active,

and well-employed mind—in spite of society, his spirits, and even his health, began to give way, under the influence of a long and unrequited attachment; and the change in his countenance and appearance became obvious even to mere acquaintance.

Affairs were in this state when Miss Monckton was called away from Newberry, by the illness of a relation. She had seen, with concern, the hopelessness of Mr. Bouverie's prospects, but had long since ceased to endeavour to aid them. She now came to the conviction that Constance would never cease to think of Sir Charles, until she was convinced that he had ceased to think of her. "When he is once married," thought the good old maid, "Constance will tutor herself into forgetfulness of him and of his unfortunate suit; she is too good a girl to do otherwise."

CHAPTER VIII.

The pomp draws near
The choir to meet the dead go forth, and sing
“ I am the resurrection and the life.”
Ah me ! these youthful bearers robed in white,
They tell a mournful tale ; some blooming friend
Is gone, dead in her prime of years.

GRAHAME'S SABBATH.

FOR some time after the departure of Miss Monckton, the sisters experienced to the fullest extent how entirely their happiness depended upon each other. Mr. Bouverie had ceased to visit them, and Mr. and Mrs. Cattell never displayed the remotest indication of interest in them. Mr. Kilderby had departed, to join his little literary coterie in London ; Dr. Creamly, after assuming to himself the reputation of having been able to have had either of the Miss Courtenays, was laying siege to Mrs. De Courcy. Miss Collins was an attentive, but an unsafe

acquaintance, for she was inquisitive and gossiping. Mrs. Clayton, a kind friend, but under the capricious controul of her husband. Mr. Bamford sometimes called, but it was generally on a fair or market day, in a great hurry, in great overalls, encompassed in which he looked and felt awkward. Under these circumstances, honest Jack was uncomfortable, and generally bustled out of the room without even tasting a glass of Mrs. Cattell's orange wine; yet the sisters took these visits kindly; for having no claim to kindness, they paid the debt of gratitude with compound interest. Meantime, in proportion as they loved the world but little, they loved each other the more. To allay, mutually, even the shadow of a sorrow; to contribute,—Emily by natural gaiety, and Constance by assumed cheerfulness, to the scanty amusements of days without variety, and an existence without object—to foster in each other every generous sentiment, and to forbear from every source of momentary contention;—such were the endeavours which were interwoven with the current of their daily actions. It was whilst thus rolled on their hours, prizing each other,

not merely as the chief, but as the only objects of their mutual sisterly fondness, that the stroke of disease fell upon Emily. At first the insidious progress of the malady which assailed her was scarcely perceptible. A slight languor, an indifference to food, and a restlessness in sleep, were its earliest indications. Then the temper began to sympathize, and a wilfulness, and capriciousness, never before even suspected, at times brought on the drooping girl the charge of impatience. Constance was not alarmed, because Dr. Creamly, whom she consulted, assured her that these symptoms were merely the usual attendants of a too rapid growth. It never, too, occurred to her that Emily would be taken from her. The very thought was repelled as a surmise too poignant, a blow too severe for the chastening hand of Providence to inflict; besides, Constance was naturally sanguine.

Some weeks passed away, and Emily neither recovered nor yet became obviously worse. A little thinner, and somewhat paler, she was observed to be; and at times, an aching, throbbing sensation across her brow was the only pain

which she acknowledged. Yet her mind seemed to be impressed with a presentiment of early death, and it was afterwards discovered that such an anticipation had actually existed. Still Constance was not afraid, and Dr. Creamly went on, soothing by anodynes, and gently stimulating by tonics. At length the latent mischief broke forth. One morning, after a night of miserable restlessness, when Constance was assisting her sister to dress, she perceived indications of partial delirium. The mind, like an expiring lamp, seemed to flicker between light and darkness. An impatience, amounting to violence, momentary, indeed, and succeeded by penitence and affection, a wildness of look, a certain pitch of the voice, a convulsed movement of the hands—showed to the alarmed Constance that some fearful change had taken place. With difficulty she half compelled, half persuaded, her beloved Emily to return to bed; that bed, which she never more quitted. She then, with agonized impatience, sent for Dr. Creamly, and seating herself by the bed-side, endeavoured to hope—or, if hope were not permitted, to submit; but found it impossible.

It can neither be desirable nor commendable to trace in detail the progress of the final struggle between life and disease. To some it might revive the recollection of sorrows irremediable; and of sufferings now exchanged for the peace of the grave.

The mode in which Constance was tried and chastened, and the submission with which she yielded up to God her dearest earthly treasure, may not, however, appear uninteresting, nor be perhaps unprofitable. She beheld herself, without a counsellor or guide, in imminent danger of parting with that being who had hitherto supplied to her the various relations in life, of whom she had been deprived—whose affection had, in a great measure, atoned to her for the loss of a tie, still, in comparison with all others of the same nature, exclusively dear to her heart. As she stood by the bed-side of her sister, and saw the last remains of recognizance and of reason fade from her fevered brow, what utter desolation of the heart came upon her!

“She does not know me!” was an exclamation which implied the bitterest complication of sorrows as it broke from the lips of Constance.

Alas ! she knew her not indeed ! Fever performed its usual ravages, and more than its usual ravages, on the fragile lily which now bent beneath its sirocco blast :—a day and night spent in restless, incessant, tantalizing mutterings, unsoothed by sleep, unvaried by any merciful interval of composure, soon told its sad tale upon the face and form of the young and lovely victim. Constance, however, was assured that it was only a common fever, and not an unusual degree of delirium ; and, as the novelty of Emily's condition went away, the horror and apprehension which it imparted, in some degree subsided.

She sat by her beloved, her only relative, tracing in the wild exclamations and unconnected ravings, or fancying that she traced, some remnants of a mind so pious, so pure, so tender, as that which it had hitherto been her happy lot to see in her sister. She strove to check the falling tears, in the vain fear that Emily might be restored to reason, and observe with alarm those indications of sorrow.

Another night drew on, and paroxysms of frenzy, succeeded by intervals of what the unobservant might deem sleep, succeeded to the

incessant ramblings of the sufferer. Ignorant of the nature or symptoms of that appalling malady, a fever of the brain, Constance trusted that this change might imply amendment, and Dr. Creamly, too cautious and courteous to alarm, dispelled not the delusion. She took her unwearied station by Emily, and striving to reinforce her sinking soul by prayer, fixed her eyes upon the changed—O how rapidly changed, face of the sufferer ! Dr. Creamly, at her request, remained in the house ; but Mr. Cattell and his automaton wife, true to their hour, had moved to their place of repose at ten o'clock.

Mitten, attentive, if not gifted with the most sublime rays of reason, watched, according to her own account, or slept, according to the observations of others, in a large easy chair in the sick room. On Constance devolved the harrowing task of marking each variation in the poor patient, from passive insensibility to reckless violence, of counting each slow returning, solemn sound of the church clock, of longing for the chimes of lonely midnight, of wearying for the moment of dawn ; of administering, unasked, to the parched lips of the beloved sufferer, water or

medicine, received indifferently, and undistinguished by the depraved taste of disease—of holding the throbbing temples, or of grasping the restless hands, lest they should injure the very form and flesh of the poor unconscious girl herself—of hoping to see, yet seeing not, a shadow of improvement or evidence of coming ease—of sinking, at last, exhausted, into an unwilling and transitory slumber. Her head fell upon the pillow beside Emily, and for a brief space she, indeed, slept. It seemed as if, in that stolen sleep, every object of distress or horror which waking recollection could supply, came to harass her repose. The figure of Emily seemed to lie beside her, a corpse—the body heaved not, the limbs were rigid, and extended. Then she heard distinctly the church bell deep tolling, and saw the usual preparation for the last duties to the dead: she tried to speak to one of the mourners, and the face of Sir Charles Marchmont met her view. She awoke with a sigh of anguish, and turned to look at Emily; but the bed was vacant—Emily was not there. In a moment of frenzy, unwatched, she had made her way to the door; but there, overpowered by

weakness, had sunk down, pale and motionless, and insensible. Constance, as she rushed to her, thought indeed that her spirit had taken flight : her screams of agony soon aroused the house, and Emily, by the assistance of Dr. Creamly and Mitten, was quickly replaced in bed.

“ She is worse, she is much worse,” exclaimed Constance, as she stood wringing her hands by the bedside ; “ she is utterly unconscious ; there is a change in her face I cannot bear to look on.— O Emily, Emily ! would that I had gone first ! Tell me,” resumed she, suddenly rousing herself from overwhelming despair, “ is there no one I can send for ?—No further advice ? Dr. Creamly, do not be angry with me, I know you have done all you could—but the wretched will catch at a broken reed in their extremity. From London ? Any where ; all that we have would I bestow for one gleam of hope. The sacrifice of my life, that were nothing—no, nothing,” she repeated, shaking her head in bitterness, “ but that could not save her’s. O Emily, my Emily !”

Dr. Creamly shed a few natural tears, and that was much for him to do : he suggested that

she should send for Dr. Berkley, a physician at some distance, whose well established name would, he secretly thought, save his skill from being called in question in a fatal issue, whilst his situation relative to Newberry would prevent his too frequent introduction into the town, where he himself desired to acquire a pre-eminent station. Dr. Berkley was therefore sent for, and Constance counted the moments until she heard his carriage stop at the gate. She could then scarcely view with patience his slow descent from the carriage, and ascent up the steps. Yet in an instant she reproached herself, for she recollected to have heard that he was an invalid, a sufferer himself from ills which he warded from the lot of others. None who beheld Dr. Berkley could indeed withhold their mingled tribute of sympathy and admiration from him. He was one of the few men in the world who had made his way by pure and honourable means. His fame was the result of no well-dressed book, lavish in words, but niggard in ideas, presenting a merciful proportion of text, with a profusion of margin, and

held up to ephemeral celebrity by the kind aid of magazines equally ephemeral. Dr. Berkley had loved the lore of his profession for higher reasons, than because its results were often combined with a sum in compound addition. He absolutely revelled in the profound and varied researches which it implies, and was wont to say and even to think, that the life of a physician would be a too happy one, if he could confine himself to the study of medicine, and relinquish its practice, as far as it was connected with emolument. With all his attainments, he had real sensibility, a property essential to those, who, like the stormy petrel, which appears only in foul weather, are visible in the domestic circle, chiefly when calamity falls upon the house, and are, indeed, in some instances, regarded, as the curious bird alluded to is by sailors, as sights of ill omen themselves. To console without deluding, was the happy art which Dr. Berkley peculiarly possessed; and as he never, for any consideration, sacrificed his sincerity to the fear of giving pain, so he knew how to temper the saddest

tidings by pointing out God's mercies, and to allay even the darkest despair by the best solace, that of genuine sympathy.

The man to whom this humble, yet just meed of praise literally belonged, was, when Constance first beheld him, in the last stage of that disease which eventually, and not long after, sent him to a grave too early for the benefit of science and of mankind: yet his faculties were still not only in their prime, but perhaps heightened by that excitement of the nervous system, which is at once fearful, but interesting. His face, attenuated by a long malady, had an acuteness of expression almost superhuman: his clear dark eyes were lightened not only by the fire of genius, but by the delusive brightness imparted by that hectic fever by which he was consumed: no indications of mental feebleness, no confusion, no hesitation, appeared, however, to shake the confidence of her who now, in the last extremity of anguish, applied to him for aid. Dr. Berkley advanced slowly, and gasping for breath, to the bed-side of Emily. Her condition had, within the last few hours, experienced another change. To the stupor,

alternated by paroxysms of delirium, had succeeded convulsions, too heart-rending and awful for a sister to witness. Nature seemed rent, as it were, in the struggles which she underwent: reason was long since wholly gone. I will not dwell upon a theme so wretched; it is sufficient to say, that the havoc was appalling in countenance, and even in feature: the mother that bore her would not have known her child. Constance had been long, long, standing by her sister, her heart almost broken by what she saw, when Dr. Berkley entered the room. Hope seemed to come along with him—hope, which where our dearest affections are concerned, so seldom wholly leaves us.

The kind physician gave a few moments to compassion, and concern, at seeing a sufferer so young, attended by a sister scarce much older. He looked around for relatives, or friends, older, and of more experience, to give support to these two young females, at a crisis so severe;—none, however, appeared. His scrutinizing eye then rested upon Constance, and met hers, with an eager interrogatory expressed in them, which those, whose word is fate, are well accus-
tom-

ed to see. In a kind, but constrained manner, afraid, as it were, of expressing either good or ill, he requested her to withdraw from the apartment of the patient, alleging as a reason, that should the slightest degree of consciousness remain, or be restored, her presence might tend to agitate the mind of her sister, and perhaps, in that sense, diminish the hope of recovery. Catching at every glimpse of comfort, and consoled even by this distant intimation of a chance, Constance instantly retired from the station, to which she had hitherto seemed, as it were, spell-bound. She awaited, therefore, in an adjoining apartment, the decision which was to confirm her hopes, or to dash the cup of happiness from her lips. Who has not, at some time or another, known the dread suspense of awaiting a consultation of life or death? Those who have, cannot forget the throbbing, suffocating sensations; the thousand conjectures, with which they then contend, or the anxious listenings with which they strive, fruitlessly, to pass moments, which seem as hours. Overwhelmed, at last, and almost sinking to the ground, by the perturbation of her own thoughts, Constance felt

herself impelled, as it were, to rush for a few instants into the open air ; and fancying that the atmosphere of the garden would give her renewed vigour, she passed down stairs into a sitting parlour which communicated with the lawn. No sooner had she entered, than she perceived Mr. Bouverie, leaning his head upon his hands, as he sat by a table near the window. He rose, and advanced to meet her, but seemed unable to articulate even the inquiry which would so naturally occur, concerning Emily. His pallid face, the tremor of his hand as it grasped hers, and above all, his silence, gave the death-blow to the fortitude of Constance. It glanced across her mind, quickened by present circumstances to every apprehension, that he knew more of Emily's state from others, than had been imparted to her, and that he believed it to be hopeless. Sickening with the thought, she sank down on the nearest chair, nor heard, for some moments, the earnest, and almost tender consolations with which Mr. Bouverie endeavoured to re-assure her.

“ You knew her,” said she, as she grasped, unconsciously, the hand which held hers, “ and

you might estimate her loss to me—but you cannot, for you have ties, and fond relations, but I—have her only !”

She broke into an agony of sorrow, in which Mr. Bouverie sympathized too deeply, to be able to afford her any comfort, and to strangers, it might have seemed that he also was about to be bereaved of a beloved sister. All that grief, that affection could suggest, he did say, but his Christian philosophy appeared almost to have deserted him on this occasion. Indeed, Constance was the first to regain firmness: hope revived in her ever buoyant mind.

“ They are coming, they are coming !” she cried, as she heard the footsteps of the two physicians descending the stairs. In a few moments they advanced, in slow procession, into the room. Dr. Berkley, with something like a tear still trembling in his eye, Dr. Creamly with his eyes fixed on the ground, in solemn silence. Constance could hardly find strength to rise from her chair, as they entered ; she mustered, however, resolution enough to say, “ Tell me the worst ; is there any hope ?”

Her speaking face was turned towards Dr.

Berkley, with an intensity of anguish depicted upon it, which unmanned Mr. Bouverie, who rose and walked out to the other end of the apartment. Dr. Berkley, dared not trust himself to look at her, as he replied to her interrogatory. He would not tantalize, and perhaps deceive her, with the usual equivocation, "Whilst life remains, hope may exist." He knew and saw, how much she would build upon that dictum, yet he was aware, how important it was not to take away all spring, lest exertion should die with hope.

"I think," he answered, "you have displayed, madam, sufficient strength of mind in your admirable and unremitting attendance upon your sister, to bear the knowledge of the dangers which really threaten her."

"I wish to know the whole truth," replied Constance, in a voice choaked with emotion.

"Then, I may say to you this:—that whilst our judgments may err, and results to certain symptoms may not occur, which we have too much reason to anticipate, yet, that our fears preponderate;"—he paused, then added in a soothing tone, "and whilst it is but too natural that

your grief should be proportionate to your loss, it will perhaps mitigate it to know, that were your sister to recover, mind and body would both, in all human probability, be left in so shattered a state, that existence would have no charm for her; and were it not far better that a lovely and intelligent being were taken early to the bosom of her heavenly Father, rather than left to drag out a lingering life of pain, perhaps of imbecility?"

"O my sister! O Emily!" exclaimed Constance, wringing her hands.

"Yet reason may return, and youth and natural health regain their mastery over disease. Meantime, let me, dear young lady, entreat you for your own sake, for hers—not to sink into despair; to bear up, to be careful lest your own health fail."

"Alas! why should I?" returned Constance bitterly.

"Why? for the sake of your other friends, of relations whom you probably have, who are dear to you, and you to them; or, if not relations, for connexions of various degrees of interest of which none can be wholly destitute, either present or in prospect."

Constance was silent. The thought of what Sir Charles might have been to her, in this extremity of grief, passed across her mind at this moment. The recollection was agonizing, yet it served for an instant to divert her recollection from Emily.

“ I have—I had—no one but my sister,” she said, after a pause of some minutes ; “ but I am resigned—if it is to save her from suffering, I shall be thankful that she should be released ;—for myself, I must try to forget that I ever had her, and to drag out life without her,” she continued, bursting into tears, but drying them quickly. “ Will you now tell me,” she pursued, rising as she spoke, “ what means I can adopt for the alleviation—of—of the life that remains to her ?—I can better bear to lose her, than to see her suffer—that is the trial.”

She spoke with an apparent resignation which astonished every body, even Mr. Bouverie, who knew, or rather guessed, that she was not wholly untutored by experience in the knowledge how to sustain affliction. Instructions were briefly, and clearly given, but a request, or rather injunction was made, which, whilst it

was intended to spare her feelings, afforded them a new trial. This was, that she should leave Emily to the charge of able nurses, under the superintendence of Dr. Creamly, until that gentleman should think it safe to recall her to the room. The benefit of the suffering patient was made the plea for this stipulation, and Constance loved her sister too well not to comply; for her feelings were too genuine not to lead her to what was right, and to banish selfishness. Doctor Berkley now prepared to take his leave. He did so, with a degree of emotion not usual to him. Constance saw him depart as if hope and all comfort departed with him. She dared not ask him when he would come again. Tomorrow, to Emily might never come.

“Farewell, madam,” said the physician: “in a few months you may have to compassionate me. Meanwhile, I commend you to spiritual comfort: I trust, sir, you will not desert Miss Courtenay,” said he, addressing Mr. Bouverie.

“It is my intention, and I trust I may be permitted, considering my sacred duties, to remain at hand lest Emily——”

“ I understand,” said Constance, “ and, O God grant that it may be so !”

“ I trust it may,” rejoined Doctor Berkley, “ but I trust also to the good sense of your pastor to urge no solemn services which must be far from acceptable to the divine Being, if they alarm or disturb the chastened spirit of one, young, and pure, and blameless—farewell.” Thus saying, he quitted the room.

A clear star-light night had succeeded a day of unparalleled loveliness: the little noises of the town were hushed into stillness; the moon just rising, appeared in crescent form behind one of the pinnacles of Saint Michael's: a planet, of magnificent splendour, gilded, and as it almost seemed, touched the summit. Constance was with Mr. Bouverie in a little sitting parlour, near her sister's chamber. The work, half finished by Emily, the books they used to read together, the songs she had last sung, lay round, some in the confusion which illness produces on inanimate objects, as well as in the minds of those who witness it, and some, just as they had been left when last the sisters worked, or drew, or played together. Con-

stance sat near the window, which had been partly opened, to revive her from a faintness from which she had recently recovered. Mr. Bouverie sat by her, his eyes fixed on hers, which were raised to the placid sky. Mitten stood near, in silence, with a hartshorn bottle in her hand, and a handkerchief to her eyes. Just then, a merry peal, which had been ringing at intervals through the day, broke out from the old tower. Constance, who had heard the sounds unnoticed before, suddenly, struck perhaps by the contrast of her own feelings, asked on what account they were rung. Mr. Bouverie, to whom the question was addressed, averted his eyes from hers, and made no reply. Mitten was, however, more communicative.

“ They are ringing, ma’am, for Sir Charles Marchmont’s wedding,” said she.

The blow which would at another time, have inflicted a pang, fell powerless. Constance wondered at her own apathy ; she seemed but to have one cause of sorrow, and that was Emily, and all other afflictions were of little moment. A few minutes’ reflection was, however, given to the subject. “ He is happy now,” thought she, “ and

thinks not of me, nor knows of my grief. Constance is forgotten—let it be so.” The train of her reflections was interrupted by the entrance of a person into the room. It was a nurse, who came to summon her to the bedside of her sister. Emily’s consciousness had returned—she had asked to see Constance—she had become aware of the disordered state of her dress—she had required that it should be arranged—she had expressed herself sensible of the danger of her situation ; fatal symptoms, which are often a prelude to death, and an accompaniment of that gleam of revival which appears as a delusive light before the darkness of the tomb. But Constance was prone to hope, and perhaps, if she had ever abandoned that delightful but deceitful guide, at the next moment had followed her again. She sprang from the detaining grasp of Mr. Bouverie, who feared the result, and ran to her sister’s apartment. A dim light, and a profound silence, still more solemn, reigned in the chamber of death. The nurses, experienced in the indications of the last awful change, stood near the bed, motionless, and fearful of disturbing the last moments of the de-

parting spirit. A gleam of light fell upon the altered face of the dying girl. Emily was calm, but it was the calm which denotes the extinction of vital energy. Her eyes were as the glassy waters, which are unruffled by the slightest breeze. She knew the voice of her sister, but the power to welcome her was gone. Constance, however, as she knelt down to kiss the emaciated hand which rested like monumental marble on the bed, perceived that her fond pressure was returned. She raised her eyes with emotions of gratitude and rapture to God: Alas! the sad reverse that followed, was the more poignant. Emily was sinking, and a few minutes closed her existence. Long, long after, it was the consolation upon which Constance dwelt, that her sister had expired in her arms, and was sensible of her presence. Feeble consolation! for with that reflection was recalled the image of her sister yielding to the grasp of death, the wreck which pain and delirium had left of what was once so lovely. Yet Constance, with a fondness, for which there was no object left, recurred often to that last pressure of the beloved hand, thought over that dying look,

directed, as she persuaded herself, to her, and when the longing came, which comes to all bereaved, to see the idolized being whom we have lost again, were it but for one moment — to clasp it in the fond arms, were it but a fleeting grasp:—imagination, too true, painted to her Emily, not buoyant in the bloom of youth, but in those agonies, extending that once fair hand, and fixing upon her that last affectionate, but piteous look.

CHAPTER VIII.

Heaven has an end in all.

SHAKSPEARE. HENRY VIII.

IT was about three months after the events related in the last chapter, that a carriage and four was seen driving up to the principal inn at Malvern, a circumstance then of far less frequent occurrence than in the present day. It was indeed considered so remarkable as to call forth particular attention from the few visitors strolling about the village, to the extreme elegance and modishness of the vehicle, and all its appurtenances, the dashing air of the lady's-maid, the conceited though demure demeanour of the valet, and the air of authority with which he directed the carriage where to stop

Observation even went so far as to collect that both the lady and gentleman who stepped out from the carriage were young, and well-favoured, well-dressed, and fashionable, and that both seemed to think it necessary to break their *tête-à-tête* by the introduction of foreign aids; she holding a French poodle by a blue ribbon fastened round her arm, he calling after him by the name of "Snow," a large white Spaniel which had luxuriated on the rug by his feet. This equipage was almost immediately followed by a plain, dark travelling-chariot, with a pair of horses, and a neat, useful-looking female servant in black on the outside. From this carriage stepped two ladies, both in deep mourning, one, young and graceful, but pale, and serious, upon whom her companion, an elderly lady, leaned for support, as they moved slowly up the steps to the door. Both these ladies looked ill; but with the former, it seemed as if sorrow, not sickness, had robbed her cheek of its roses, for the roundness and agility of her youthful form remained to her. With respect to the latter, there were evident marks of recent disease, and of present emaciation.

It so happened, that by some mistake, these two newly arrived parties were both ushered into one room. The lady and gentleman, having entered a few minutes the soonest, were already seated, when the ladies in black walked slowly into the same apartment. An instant recognition followed.

“ Miss Monckton, my dear Miss Monckton, is it you ?” said the gentleman.

“ Yes, Sir Charles, it is my remains,” returned the spinster, sinking into a chair : but the younger lady had, with the speed of lightning, fled from the apartment, before she was discerned by the quick eye of the Baronet.

A momentary pause ensued, the awkwardness of which was unbroken by any effort to dispel it on the part of the lady of Sir Charles Marchmont, who sat at another corner of the room, playing gently with her poodle, with as total an indifference to what was passing as if she were alone. Her back was turned to Miss Monckton, who afterwards, in describing her, remarked, that all she saw of her was, that she had a back-bone as stiff as a Frenchwoman’s, and a toss of the head, even when speaking to

her dog, which, she thought, augured no good to Sir Charles's domestic peace. She had not, however, much time to make observations, for she was too much engrossed in answering the eager, yet embarrassed, inquiries of her old friend and former favourite. She was also somewhat painfully occupied in tracing an indescribable change in his countenance: it was reckless, joyless, rakish: the disguises of an attire directed by fashion, and adapted to set off that which all men prize, the person, could not conceal the change from active and vigorous youth, to the languor of impaired health and of dissipated habits.

"I might well have expected it to be so," thought the good old maid, and the tears rushed into her eyes. "But I am intruding," she said, aloud.

"Not in the least, dear Miss Monckton," replied Sir Charles, eagerly; "allow me to introduce to you Lady Marchmont,"—the word seemed to choak him; "Lady Marchmont, let me present to you a very dear and valued friend of mine, Miss Monckton."

His words for a few moments seemed to pass

unheeded, for the lady did not turn her head. The colour rose to his face ; but just as he was preparing another attack, Lady Marchmont condescended to look half round—bowed, as if she could hardly make up her mind to such a condescension, and then resumed her attentions to her dog.

“ Odious little barking thing,” thought Miss Monckton ; “ I neither like dogs nor children when they are petted.”

She looked with sincere compassion on Sir Charles. “ Tell me, my dear friend,” said he, pressing with his usual warmth of manner her hand between his, “ tell me some tidings of Newberry. Are you here alone ? How is Bouverie ? How—how is Miss Courtenay ?”

“ He has not then seen her,” thought Miss Monckton ; “ it is well. Your friends at Newberry, Sir Charles, have encountered various lots since you left them. Mr. Bouverie is well, quite well, and, I hope, happy.” Sir Charles involuntarily sighed. “ Constance is recovering : she has sustained her loss as well, I think, as one who encounters such a calamity could do.”

“ Her loss ! what loss ? ” interrupted Sir Charles, impatiently.

“ What ! have you not heard of it ? Emily is no more ; she died the very day that— ” Miss Monckton began, but checked herself—“ she died after an illness of very short duration,” and Miss Monckton’s tears began to flow.

There was a dead silence for a few minutes.

“ And is Emily indeed gone ? ” said Sir Charles, at last, deeply affected. “ Sweet Emily ! Tell me, tell me, Miss Monckton, how, in what form of suffering was the blow given, and how does her sister, how does Constance bear it ? You said well—O, but I know her strong affectionate feelings, and that all—all her happiness was centered in this sister. And is she at Newberry alone ? ”

“ She is not at Newberry,” replied Miss Monckton, trembling lest further inquiries should be made. “ And permit me to say, that whilst I am fully sensible of the kindness of your sympathy for her, I—I— ”

“ I understand,” returned Sir Charles, mournfully ; “ you are quite right ; I shall speak of her no more. Only allow me one

word—that is to say, if ever she should chance to revert to my unfortunate name, will you, may I ask you, to assure her how truly I grieve for Emily—for her. Among all her friends there will not be a more sincere mourner than I am,” he continued, his eyes filling with tears.

“I will tell her so, when she does, by any chance, revert to your name,” replied Miss Monckton, in a chilling tone. “At present, I hope, her thoughts are occupied with a different subject.” She rose as she spoke, and began to move towards the door.

“What! is it so? Nay, but you must tell me,” cried Sir Charles, seizing both of the cruel spinster’s hands, and forcing her down upon her seat. “Ah! I always knew how it would be; and Bouverie deserves her. Is it not so, Miss Monckton?” The very great warmth of his manner to his friend had cooled.

“There is nothing decided,” returned the lady, “but if unsullied goodness, devoted attachment, disinterested acts of kindness and friendship, and simplicity and integrity of conduct,”—she spoke with great emphasis on these

last words,—“ can secure a woman’s affection——”

“ I trust he will obtain it—I know he deserves it,” said the generous Sir Charles, with strong emotion, pressing Miss Monckton’s hand. “ Only tell me, if he is likely to come here, that I may avoid him, for I can wish him well only at a distance—I cannot meet him.”

“ Well, then, you had better not delay your departure,” said Miss Monckton, who was delighted to have a plea for frightening the young Baronet away from Malvern, “ for I have great hopes of his coming soon.”

“ Indeed ! then I hope I shall prevail upon Lady Marchmont to leave Malvern ; if not, I must leave her here,” said Sir Charles, seriously, and in a more subdued tone than that in which the whole of this conversation had passed.

“ Prevail ! what have you not yet begun to have your own way ?” rejoined Miss Monckton, in a low tone : “ I thought one month only was given to slavery ; but old maids know little of these matters.” And she again rose to go to her room. “ I presume, Sir Charles, you will let me pass this time ; you

are not meditating an abduction of me, are you ? if so, you must take my medicine chest with me," continued she with a heavy sigh.

" I will only run off with you as far as your own room. How long do you stay here, and where are you to be ?—Lady Marchmont will be so happy to have you for a neighbour."

" Will she ?" thought Miss Monckton, casting a sharp glance to the place where the young bride sat.

" Lady Marchmont — Harriet, my dear—Miss Monckton is going."

Lady Marchmont half rose, and now, for the first time, gave a scrutinizing look of privileged insolence at the spinster. Miss Monckton's high blood mounted to her cheeks, and Sir Charles looked at his wife as if he could have said, " I hate you." Such looks as all the world knows, are not unfrequently to be seen within the pale of holy matrimony. Miss Monckton slightly curtseyed and moved away.

" Sir Charles, where are you going ?" inquired Lady Marchmont, in a tone very similar to that in which a rigid governess questions the movements of a refractory pupil.

“ To see Miss Monckton to her room, Lady Marchmont,” returned the Baronet, bridling in with difficulty his temper, naturally impetuous of controul. He closed the door after him, nor awaited a reply.

“ I really scarcely know where my destiny lies,” said Miss Monckton ; “ this young person will direct me,” addressing herself to a servant, “ and let me not trouble any young man to be running after me.”

“ If all the world be faithless, I will not desert you, dear Miss Monckton,” answered Sir Charles, gaily, as he led her up the stairs.

“ It is some time,” replied Miss Monckton, “ since I have received attentions at the first hand : they have generally been offered to me, with an eye to some fair niece, or young friend of mine : it is not me, but my influence which has been courted. Well, now, although this really *disinterested* politeness on your part is highly gratifying to me, I must beg to decline it further, especially as——”

A message now came from Lady Marchmont, signifying that Sir Charles was wanted down stairs immediately.

“ Tell her I shall come in half an hour,” replied her husband.

“ How provoking ! I really must get rid of him some way,” thought Miss Monckton, “ the sight of him will kill poor Constance.”

At this juncture, a fresh hero appeared upon the scene of action : this was Mr. Spencer, who, fancying that nothing could even go on properly without his interference, stepped forward to relieve Miss Monckton, of what he, from the bar below, conceived to be her difficulties, and to usher her to her room. His pride was also interested in the appearance of having an acquaintance at the inn to which he had newly arrived, and of ensconcing himself duly in the high opinion of master, mistress, bar-maid, chambermaid, waiter, hostler, and boots, of the Foley Arms. He stepped forward, therefore, with an alacrity only delayed by his habitual conceit, which acted as a clog to a disposition naturally obliging : he moved, however, as quickly as a man of importance could do, to the step whereon Miss Monckton and Sir Charles were resting in their amicable altercation.

“Are you interrogatory, madam, as to your apartment—I have seen it, Miss Monckton, and can assure you, your motions to arrive to it must be perambulatory. This way, madam, this way, Miss Courtenay is there already, and has done me the honour of taking cognizance of me—though she is somewhat sombreniferous, as I perceive by her black dress.”

“Miss Courtenay!” said Sir Charles, starting back—yet he led Miss Monckton on to the door of her apartment, having reached which, he pressed her hand, bowed in silence, and retired.

“Thank you, Spencer, I am very much obliged to you,” said Miss Monckton, with much sincerity, as she opened the door of her sitting-room.

Constance was there, and of course alone. She was standing before the window when Miss Monckton entered, so that the latter could not judge, by her countenance, of the effect which her passing glance of Sir Charles had had upon her: neither was the subject at that time mentioned by either. It was, however, when their quiet dinner had been dispatched, and in the

convenient interval of twilight, when the fire, “with faint illumination,” revealed only the sharp points of Miss Monckton’s acute face, that natural curiosity, thought to be peculiar to woman, because men have too much guile to show it, impelled Constance to make some mention of the events of the morning. It was not in unison with her character to go round about to a point, she therefore introduced it direct.

“Will you tell me, but I fear you will not, what passed between you and—and Sir Charles Marchmont this morning? Did he mention my name? and did you see his wife? and did you talk to him of Emily?” asked Constance, her eyes beginning to fill with tears, at the first of these interrogatories, and fairly running over at the last.

Miss Monckton compassionated her friend so much that she scarcely knew how to answer her. She wept also, for a few moments, so truly did she feel for the disappointed affection of two persons, who, from their dispositions, and mutual preference, seemed to be destined for each other. It was also the first time that Constance had found strength to mention Emi-

ly's name to her, and Miss Monckton had not yet ceased to grieve over the loss of that young creature, with a poignancy which might seem to belong to the feelings of a mother, rather than to those of a friend. She trusted, however, to the excellence of the principles and goodness of heart of Constance, and after a little hesitation, replied to her thus:—

“Why should you, my dear, seek to probe the present feelings of Sir Charles towards you, for such is the drift of your question: have you not a far stronger, a far holier interest in one from whom no adverse fate severs you, from whom the kindest actions have emanated, not only to yourself, but—to her whom you have lost. You do not forget that, Constance?”

“I do not indeed; my gratitude, my esteem, are all excited for that individual. I shall not, whatever it may cost me, depart from the pledge I have given him through you. I only wish for time, a little time, to enable me to efface from my recollection the image not only of a living object, but of one, now happily away from a world of wretchedness. Believe me, my dear friend, that I am an altered

person. I now see that there is nothing valuable in life but the consciousness of duty—nothing to be desired but the power of performing it.”

“Ah, Constance ! a little inclination still gains the ascendancy at times.”

“Yes, but I *will* struggle with it,” said Constance, earnestly—“and, that it is a struggle can be no reproach to me. It rather stimulates my exertions. Duty, gratitude, esteem, all, all contend in favour of Mr. Bouverie ; but, opposed to these worthy advocates, come, a first preference—a preference fostered by the imagination as well as the reason—aided by intimacy, cherished in difficulties, increased, perhaps, by separation and disappointment.”

She wept as she spoke.

“Never, never, can I cease to think of the fleeting months which we were permitted to enjoy together, as the brightest moments of a life of sorrow—never can I, even though I have long since ceased to love him, cease to trace his footsteps through life with an interest which will make his woes my woes, and which will elate my heart with joy, when I hear of his rising in virtuous deeds, and doing

honour to his name. I cannot attempt to conceal from you these feelings ; they are blameless, because they are natural ; they are blameless, because they will not actuate my conduct to another."

Miss Monckton was for some time silent ; at length she said, with a tone not devoid of bitterness, " A fine prospect for Mr. Bouverie, I think."

" No," replied Constance, with some warmth ; " if it be my lot to pass my life with him, he shall never repent that he bestowed his affections upon me, loved me when I did not deserve it, supported me in hours of unparalleled affliction, and preserved me afterwards from despair. The union that is based upon gratitude and sincere respect, must be happy, because it is sanctioned by Heaven."

" Alas !" said Miss Monckton, " human inclinations will step in, even into these holy unions ; I fear the unholy ones answer the best. But I see the aim of all this is to beguile me into a false security, that I may tell you what Sir Charles was saying."

" My dear friend, how you misjudge me," re-

turned Constance, blushing. “ I will mention this subject no more.”

“ I wonder if we shall see Mr. Bouverie to-morrow,” said Miss Monckton.

Constance was silent.

Little more conversation passed between them, and the two friends separated for the night.

The proximities of an inn are sometimes very remarkable: the deadliest foes may rest in an apartment divided from each other only by a slight wainscoting. The person whom you would travel miles to avoid, may have occupied your apartment, only ten minutes before you enter it yourself. Whilst Constance dressed for the night, and received, in silence, the assistance of Miss Monckton’s maid, she was informed by that individual that Mr. Spencer, a man of note in the mind of Sarah, had engaged rooms at the Foley Arms for a week; “ one for his own self, commanding an extensive prospect, which, he remarked, might be called an expensive prospect, for he paid a good deal for looking out upon it; another for the lady’s maid, who was vastly particular, and went all over the house before she was suited;”

the best sitting-rooms for "Sir Charles and my Lady."

"Yes, ma'am; I'm vastly confident that Sir Charles is now in the very next room to you; his door is between this room and your sitting parlour. My lady almost always stays in her own apartment, for they don't agree together at all."

"Good heavens!" thought Constance. "By what strange fate am I to be brought in contact with those whom I hoped never to meet! We must leave this place."

She dismissed her attendant, bolted the door, and sank into a musing attitude before her dressing-table. For once, the image of her lamented sister, usually more than ever present to her mind at the hour of repose, seemed to have become fainter, or to be mingled with other ideas. It was, perhaps, not only the startling incidents of the day, but a change of scene which beguiled her for the time of the recollection on which her heart doated. The room, the bed was different to that where she had lain, with Emily by her side, in sisterly affection, and where often, since her bereavement, she had withdrawn their curtains, half led, by long habit, to expect still

to find her sister within their enclosure, and had then sunk down in fruitless agony, unable, even by prayer, to compose herself to sleep. But now the sorrow-stricken Constance revolved in her mind every long-cherished and often remembered circumstance of her acquaintance with Sir Charles. She began to question, in her own mind, the expediency, and even the propriety of that fiat which sent him from her, to the heartlessness of an unwelcome marriage. The painful idea occurred, that, supposing their engagement had been set aside merely for a time, circumstances might have worked together for their common blessing. But no! his honour, his favour in the sight of God and man, his own redemption from an act of infatuation, not to say baseness, were implicated in the step which she took, whether it were friendly to his imprudent, and even criminal addresses to her, or destructive of his hopes. Constance, upon reflection, could not but bless Heaven that she had been enabled to act as she did. The trial that remained to her was another sacrifice: it was to reward the long-tried affection of a man whom she loved

not ; to unite herself to him, from gratitude, from generosity, from the wish to avoid giving to another the pangs which it was in her power to avert. Her inclinations revolted against an union, in which duty must be the substitute for love ; but the kindness and nobleness of her nature impelled her to consent to it.

“ Consent to it !” thought she, as she revolved the coming days of her life in melancholy anticipation ; “ have I not already done so !—allowed Miss Monckton to give encouragement to his hopes—concealed from him my unhappy attachment. But I will do so no longer,” said she, as she laid herself on her pillow. “ Deceived, I will no longer allow him to be—he shall know all ; and if he will venture on a union so circumstanced, I will, I must consent to it. And why should I repine ? What earthly ties have I to reconcile me to the dreary prospect of existence ? In Bouverie, the friend, the counsellor of my youth, I shall at least have one whom I can render happy. I shall at least be dear to some one : the sacred name of home, which from my infancy has been unknown to

me, and the source of envy when my young companions spoke of it with happy fondness—that joy will at least be mine.”

She strove thus to reconcile herself to what she thought it right to encounter; yet, in spite of all her strivings with herself, the consciousness of being under the same roof with one to whom her young heart had been, so recently, passionately attached, imparted an interest to life which she had not of late known. She heard Sir Charles walk slowly down the corridor to his solitary apartment; for Lady Marchmont had retired to rest. She fancied, as she listened, that his step had not the buoyancy of former days, and that a sigh broke from him as he entered his room. She heard him pace up and down long, long afterwards, as if averse to repose, and listened with surprise to his dismissal of Spencer from his chamber in a manner bordering upon petulance, in the kind-hearted and usually courteous Sir Charles. At last, while tears still bathed her eyes, she fell asleep, and awoke in the morning with that weight of care at her heart which anxious reflection over night produces.

Miss Monckton's first occupation in the morning was to arrange an instant removal into lodgings; for she felt secretly convinced that Sir Charles would not remove from Malvern, notwithstanding all his asseverations.

“ He has adopted fashionable notions, thought the good lady, and, without harbouring any thing positively wrong, he would have no objection, I dare say, to what is called a Platonic interest in my unhappy Constance; but no—he has injured her and Mr. Bouverie enough; let him keep to his own proud ice-plant of a wife, with her ten thousand a year, and leave humble people to themselves.”

Accordingly, before noon, she established herself in a newly erected cottage, about half a mile from the inn, overlooking the peaceful plains of Worcestershire, and commanding a view which would inspire the morose and the unfortunate with emotions of gratitude to the Author of Nature, who has spread before man every incentive to industry, in the rich and smiling variety of that happy region.

“ We only want one accession to our party,” said Miss Monckton, as she partook with Con-

stance of an early supper. Constance looked down.

“Nay, Constance, do not discourage all my plans for your comfort.”

“You are mistaken,” said Constance; “I acknowledge them most gratefully, and nothing of unkindness nor of obstinacy on my part shall be interposed to frustrate the wishes of those who are now every thing to me.”

She spoke with a composure which almost startled Miss Monckton, to whom it seemed that an indifference to her own lot began to be mingled with her regrets for her sister. She almost felt alarmed to see her consent too readily to devote herself to a man whom she had long known without attachment; but Miss Monckton was mistaken in her estimate of the feelings which actuated Constance.

It was during the afternoon of the ensuing day, that Mr. Bouverie reached Malvern. He might now be thought a happy man, or, as he was called at Newberry, “the happy man;” for circumstances had taken place since the death of Emily, which had made, or seemed to make, a considerable alteration in the sentiments of

Miss Courtenay towards him. It was his lot to be the only person to administer comfort to her—the only being to whom she could even speak of Emily; for he had witnessed her last moments, and had supported Constance in the first violence of her despair. Those who have known grief, will also know how dependent we become on those who have watched with us, and prayed for us in some dire extremity; and who, while sympathizing deeply, are yet sufficiently unaffected by the event which wounds us, to suggest the best sources of comfort. Constance had little thought that she should ever long and sedulously listen for Mr. Bouverie's approach, or that she should feel desolate at his departure. Sometimes, in the loneliness and misery of her condition, she felt that she could almost cling to him, and entreat him not to leave her to the wretchedness of her own reflections, to the utter desolation of her own heart. She felt and showed, that to see him, and to unburden her griefs to him, was almost necessary to sustain her from despondency. She thought of the last night of Emily's existence, when he alone, of all her limited circle of acquaintance, flew to

her succour, and gratitude was added to her previous esteem.

Mr. Bouverie long distrusted the proofs of regard, and of a dependence, dear to him, upon his advice, and a love for his society, which Constance, under the influence of these considerations, had evinced towards him. He was too generous to take advantage of the circumstances which had thrown them together. He was too delicate-minded not to dread mistaking gratitude for love ; yet he knew not the excess and duration of her early attachment to Sir Charles, and besides was himself in love—a condition which incapacitates a man from forming a correct estimate of the sentiments which he inspires, and which he is apt to judge by his own feelings.

At length Miss Monckton returned, dived with her keen, penetrating mind, into the wishes both of Constance and of Mr. Bouverie, and resolved, with the ill-judging dispatch of a single woman, who had never been in love, to expedite a matter which she had much at heart. “ Now is the time,” thought the spinster ; “ Constance will never be in so yielding a con-

dition of mind as at the present time ; and why should she tamper longer with the affections of a man who not only idolizes, but deserves her ?” Her chief endeavour, therefore, after some weeks had been given to sorrow for Emily, was to impress upon Constance the devoted affection which Mr. Bouverie bore to her, and to represent the misery that was in store for him, should he see her united to another. “ But I shall never marry,” was the constant reply made by Constance. “ Well then, you cannot expect him to remain unmarried also,” was Miss Monckton’s ready answer ; “ and do you think he can ever marry any one but you ; and do you consider it kind, or right, to waste his days in hopeless and fruitless attentions to one who will never repay them ? Are you not blighting his existence ? have you not buoyed him up with imprudent indications of regard and preference ? and are you justified in withholding from him the reward of his long attachment ?”

Respecting these, and similar representations, Constance at first was silent, then she began to reply, in such terms as these : “ Give me but time ; allow me but to recover, if I ever can recover,

health broken, spirits gone—and then, dear friend, I will do what you wish me—do what is right.”

At last Miss Monckton was silenced upon this, and upon all other subjects, except her own complaints, by a return of the severe illness from which she had previously suffered. It was after her recovery from this malady that a journey to Malvern had been recommended. It was upon occasion of this excursion that the long-repressed feelings of Mr. Bouverie at last broke forth. Yet he had not courage to make known his sentiments to Constance by any better mode than a letter; that method which gives a woman leisure for a refusal, and a fair opportunity of cavilling at an offer. His letter was, however, simple and reasonable. It recalled to her recollection their long acquaintance, and specified the wishes and hopes to which that acquaintance had, in him, given birth. It breathed no other petition than simply to learn if her affections were engaged; if so, to be relieved from suspense. It expressed, what was indeed true, that supposing, what the writer conceived but too probable, the answer to be unfavourable to him, the utmost interest, and

the secure regards of friendship, would still, on his part, attend her through life.

Constance long and bitterly grieved over this epistle, which offered her an alternative so painful to a generous mind. Had she been left to act for herself, she would, however, on reflection, decidedly have negatived all hopes on the part of one whom she could not endure to deceive; but she was persuaded by Miss Monckton into a different mode of conduct, lectured for even remembering a former attachment, scolded for the pain she would inflict, and, finally, by way of friendship, driven into an engagement not only undesired, but dreaded. And she knew that she had, from various circumstances, been induced to cherish the sentiments entertained towards her in a manner delusive, as it was undesigned. This consideration decided her, and a pledge was given, to be redeemed when time should have re-established her health and spirits; a pledge to which she was endeavouring to reconcile herself, when she arrived at Malvern.

Mr. Bouverie received the encouragement which Constance, or rather which Miss Monckton

gave him, more as if it had been a refusal, instead of an acceptance. For he possessed what would be valuable to all clergymen, an insight into character, which led him to distrust the cold, and measured, and extorted promise of Constance, and he felt that he had cast his all upon the die which he threw down, and that a reluctant engagement were worse, and yet he knew not whether to deem it so, than an honest refusal. He had besides an elevated notion of the attachment which might be reciprocally felt between man and woman, and it was difficult to come up to his standard. He saw that the intensity of his own feelings was unshared by Constance; that whilst she evinced every thing that was kind, and generous, and right, her return to his absorbing devotion was inadequate; it was not love. Seeing this, deceiving himself less since the avowal of his feelings, than before, and perhaps expecting more explicit preference, and receiving less, Mr. Bouverie, during the short interval between his declaration, and the removal of Miss Monckton and Miss Courtenay to Malvern, often revolved in his mind the necessity of releasing Constance from an un-

willing contract, and giving back her pledge. But he found this step impracticable: he felt that the current of his existence would be from henceforth frozen: he even dreaded the effects upon his mind and character; for having once loved Constance, he could lower the pitch of his affections to no less ardent passion. Having once fixed his hopes on her, all subordinate objects would be distasteful; and thus it always is, when, in the object of a fond attachment, to loveliness and youth are united the gifts of intellect, and a character at once soft and gentle, yet enthusiastic and energetic.

It was in no very happy state of spirits therefore, that Mr. Bouverie reached Malvern, three days after the arrivals there, alluded to in the beginning of this chapter. The parting with Constance had been on her part tearful; yet her sorrow was rather on parting from the friend of her sister, than on bidding adieu to one whom she loved. It was mingled with a thousand overpowering emotions on quitting Newberry, where the grave of Emily, fresh with the dews of spring, offered its silent monitory lesson to the passenger through the churchyard of old St.

Michael. It was excited also, by a sense of inability to reward the affection, and merit the confidence of him who had placed his destiny in her hands, and by the harassing effects of perplexity which course to take to ensure to him the happiness he merited. The grief of parting from him, therefore, did not form a portion of the sorrow with which she received his adieu, far more agitated even than her own. All this, Mr. Bouverie saw; and whilst the privilege of solacing her was dear to him, he felt, with the sickening of disappointed affection, that he was not the first object in her thoughts. It was, therefore, with contending resolutions, and wavering councils, that he began his solitary journey to Malvern, finding himself, at the close of it, as little decided upon the subject of his meditation, as when he had set out upon his travels.

CHAPTER IX.

When the dresser, the cook's drum, thunders, come on.
The service will be lost else.—

MASSINGER.

THE half hour bell was ringing for the general dinner of the inmates of the principal hotel, when Mr. Bouverie alighted at the door. He requested a private room, and ordered dinner. The former was immediately procured, but with regard to the latter, he was entreated, as a very great favour, to dispense with dinner in a private way, all the waiters, rooms, and other appurtenances being taken up in attendance upon a newly married couple, a "baronet," and his lady, as the master of the hotel specified, whose servants gave as much trouble as themselves. Little did Mr. Bouverie think that he was in

such contiguity with his former friend and rival; and luckily for the master of the inn, Mr. Spencer did not, as usual, present himself at the front door, with a half rubbed out edition of Thomson's Seasons, with his own important name in it, to show himself off as a literary character, and to see what other people are. If he had, on this occasion, made a sally, it is probable that Mr. Bouverie, his servant, and horses, would not, at this time, have afforded a hundred per cent. profit to the master of the hotel. Unconsciously, however, the good-natured Vicar went up stairs to dress, and down stairs to dinner, where he found the usual bill of fare, both human and culinary, with which the table of a watering place hotel is generally graced.

Every one knows how much the order of all other societies is reversed at a boarding-house. The talkative, the selfish, the importunate, the presumptuous, there carry the day, in opposition to intelligence, politeness, and even gentility. Man is seen under his worst aspect; and woman on these occasions, is usually so hemmed in with precautions, etiquettes, and affectations, that she is scarcely seen at all. The only unreserved,

and ingenuous characters, are the hackneyed, thorough-going, eating, card-playing, regular frequenters of boarding-houses and watering places. The majority of the party collected when Mr. Bouverie entered, were gentlemen; some few ladies, from economy perhaps, or, as they alleged, for the sake of agreeable society, some to look after their husbands, others to get husbands, and all to talk and eat, had joined the public table. Seniority, of course, gave precedence, and, by the character of those who claimed this distinction, the merits of the hotel, might be estimated in a gastronomic sense.

The gentleman at the head of the table was an officer, remarkable for nothing, except his aptitude at eating, and his facility at carving. An air of profound folly reigned on his countenance, and constituted the predominant expression of his full blue eyes. He was, however, inoffensive, respectably dull, and unobtrusively uninteresting. Opposite to him, at the bottom of the table, sat a gentleman of considerable literary attainments, and of much acumen, both in the affairs of life, and in the reasonings of philosophy. This person was

not cursed with an exuberance of sensibility : his head was clear, because it was never misled by his heart. As Bacon is considered to have outrun time, so might Mr. Trelauney be said to have penetrated futurity, and forestalled in his own character the principles of that doctrine of Utilitarianism, which, like an iceberg, has been travelling from the remote region of speculation, chilling this nether world with its influence. All the acquirements, the advantages of birth, and fortune, and intellect, which Mr. Trelauney possessed, seemed, in his estimation, to have their relation to one object only, self. Sceptical, and often incredulous concerning the merits of others, supremely satisfied with himself, on one subject alone did he display human frailty, and human feelings—eating : yet even this he pursued with so much science and method, that he scarcely seemed to indulge in it ; although it constituted the sole aim or end of his existence during dinner time, conversation being a very subordinate object. The inflexible features of this gentleman, his dry, dispiriting remarks, oracular tone of reply, and sedulous protection of

the rights of his own plate, very early attracted Mr. Bouverie's dislike to a character so uncongenial with his own.

The lady of most consequence at the table, was Lady Colocynth, a widow of good fortune, but, according to her own account, of indifferent constitution. This personage might figuratively be said to live, only for the purpose of studying her digestion. The question of her friends and sycophants was not, "How are your spirits?"—"how are your nerves?" but, "how did your dinner agree with you yesterday?" Before dinner, a sort of roll was called over all the dishes on parade; after the repast, there was a recapitulation of all the offending substances that might, or might not, have entered her ladyship's lady-like stomach. It was, however, observable by her ladyship's intimate friends, that plain beef or mutton were sure to disagree: rich soups, calf's head hashed, fricandeaux, and fricassées were found to be easiest of digestion, and the most nutritive. The weaknesses of the widow were sily and not unfairly touched upon by

her next neighbour, a plain country gentleman, who never knew that he had a "system," or, indeed, any thing but his purse and his palate to consult upon matters of eating, and as he partook of every thing fearlessly, and gave his opinion with the same boldness, he was looked upon as a sort of oracle by Lady Colocynth, under whose wing she might escape her spasmodic attacks, and lay aside, for once in a way, certain anti-dispeptic remedies prescribed by one of the profession who had "studied" her constitution.

"But then he knows my constitution," was the constant summing-up of her reasons for continuing faithful to one who was "over the hills and far away."

"Certainly, that he does," echoed her ladyship's familiar spirit, Miss Roberts, from the opposite side of the table.

"And is the only person who does," pursued her ladyship.

"Others might if they had the same opportunity," observed Miss Roberts, with a look of importance; at the same time not wishing to stand in the way of any Malvern practitioners;

for Miss Roberts was too well aware of her dependance upon the world to quarrel with any one of its denizens, and had never been known to fall out with any one, except an old friend who was going to the East Indies for ten years.

“Mr. Lint here, is very clever,” said the country gentleman, who, to balance his good sense on other points, was a slave to the genius of gossip, and caterer-general for news to the establishment. “He has been already called in to Lady Marchmont.”

“Lady Marchmont! good heavens!” thought Mr. Bouverie; “what, is she here!”

“She had hysterics the other night—didn’t you tell me so, Miss Roberts?” said Lady Colocynth, appealing to her companion.

“I heard as much, my lady, but cannot take upon me to say that it was true,” replied the cautious Miss Roberts.

“Their valet tells mine, that they live like cat and dog together,” pursued the squire; “or, as he terms it, for he has got this new-fangled education, like the canine and the feline species.”

“Very good, exactly so,” interposed a long-bodied, thin-faced, elderly man, one of the expletives of society, whose conversation was chiefly interjectional. He was one of those benevolent persons who aid a song with a timely “bravo,” a speech, with a “very true,”—“very good,” and even sometimes settle the fate of an argument, with “extremely well put,”—“very fair, a happy hit.”

“It is quite dreadful to think of educating servants,” remarked Lady Colocynth, who had caught enough of the scent of high breeding to make her esteem narrow-mindedness genteel, but had not followed the track sufficiently far, to get into the open and cultivated plains of liberal thinking.

“Dreadful!” echoed Miss Roberts; “even our laundry-maid at C—— can read now; can she not, Lady Colocynth?”

“Indeed! bless me!” was heard from the thin gentleman.

“And why not?” asked the squire.

“O, they may read, but I would never have them taught to spell,” replied Lady C.

“An admirable precaution against discove-

ries of any other person's bad spelling," muttered Mr. Trelauney to himself, as he shaved a slice off from the breast of a turkey.

"Lady Marchmont," resumed the squire, as if not caring to push an argument with unequal combatants, "has good feet and a good figure, as I see; but—"

"She's immoderately proud," remarked Mr. Trelauney, who tolerated pride in no one but himself.

"Then she will just suit her husband," said a thick Scotch voice near Mr. Bouverie; and, turning, he saw the brush head, and voluminous, roller-towel neckcloth of Mr. Manvers.

"He's a fine gentlemanly fellow, Sir Charles," observed the country gentleman, as he helped Lady Colocynth, of course against her will, to some trifle.

"Nobody," whispered Miss Roberts across the table to her patroness, "helps to trifle equal to Mr. Trelauney.—Do let him send you some—he digs deep."

The hint was not inaudible; but Mr. Trelauney, who was helping himself, took no notice.

“ A very presumptuous upstartish fellow,” said Mr. Manvers, with his mouth full of rice pudding, and helping himself at the same time to a glass of wine out of his own labelled bottle, which, as Trelauney had caustically observed, was like the widow’s cruise, always full.

“ Indeed, bless me ! exactly so,” said the thin gentleman, eating away laboriously at a salad.

“ How do you know that ?” asked Mr. Trelauney, looking hatchet-wise defyingly at Mr. Manvers, whom he delighted to set down, and if possible, humiliate.

“ I have known Sir Charles Marchmont from my infancy.”

“ In what capacity ?” inquired Trelauney, without raising his eyes from a prawn which he was flaying with the most persevering nicety.

“ I will thank you for some of those ; I am remarkably fond of prawns,” said the squire, stretching forth his plate, on seeing that Mr. Trelauney had collected a regiment of these picked gentry near him—“ *Par les moustaches, s’il vous plait.*”

“ Very good, very fair,” said the thin gen-

tleman ; “ some for me, sir, if you please ; by the moustach,” he added timorously, for he was born before gentlemen, and even ladies, thought of speaking French.

Mr. Trelauney looked as if he could have annihilated him ; but sent him three, observing “ They are very indigestible.”

“ Then I’ll none of them !” exclaimed Lady Colocynth, holding her hands before her plate, as if she were afraid of being taken by storm. “ Miss Roberts, you are not eating them ?”

“ No—yes ; I’ll take no more,” answered the young lady ; “ but remember, my dear Lady Colocynth, that I am a perfect Hercules compared to you.”

“ Were you at Oxford with Sir Charles ?” inquired Mr. Trelauney of young Manvers, who had imprudently offended him by sending for prawns also.

“ No ; he was at Oxford five years before my time, and did not finish out his terms,” returned Manvers, without turning to the right or the left, and looking invulnerable.

“ You are mistaken there—mistaken,” replied Mr. Trelauney, with emphasis. “ He was at

Oxford in my time, and I cannot have been five years your senior."

There was a solemn silence for some time, till a virgin lady, who had seen younger roses drop off the thorn before her, observed that "nothing was so deceptive as age." Her eye glanced at Miss Roberts, who, known in the circles of Cheltenham for the last thirty years, by dint of ringlets, white crape dresses, and every possible exposure of a scraggy, presenceless form, had, or thought she had, contrived to pass for young--the ambiguous title of "girl" being still accorded to her. But human nature revolted against this infringement upon her landmarks, and the indefinite air of forty-five had begun to pervade her countenance and manner.

"Nothing so deceptive, I grant you," observed the country gentleman. "Talking of age, has any one observed an elderly and a young lady walking about here in deep mourning? April and November I call them, for one must not talk of January and May before the ladies."

"Very goo—d," fell from the lips of the thin

gentleman, with some hesitation, for he was peeling a walnut.

“The younger she, I think one of the finest girls I have seen for a long time.—My dear Lady Colocynth, do not eat preserved apricots—now don’t: ’tis worse than a piece of salt beef, at which you nearly screamed—we’ll send them all down to Mr. Trelauney.”

They went, and of course, like Regulus, never returned to their original quarters.

“The elder one,” pursued the squire, “is a gentlewoman, but—” he stopped, and finished not his sentence as his lively dark eye glanced around him. “What do you think of the youngest, Trelauney—Miss Courtenay, they tell me, is her name.—What do you say to her face?”

Mr. Bouverie’s colour came, as the dry connoisseur in beauty, and all other ornaments of life, paused, and tasted a biscuit before he answered—“Very good.”

“Her height?”

“Just the thing; I find no fault with it.”

The Vicar could have struck him.

“Her figure?”

“Promising—by no means indifferent.”

Mr. Bouverie could scarcely sit at table. He felt as if something very sacred were profaned by being discussed as if the proportions of a horse had been canvassed, and by one who had sense, but no feeling to appreciate the speaking loveliness of the subject of discourse.

“You know Miss Courtenay, Bouverie, I think,” said Mr. Manvers, who now, for the first time, bobbed his brush top in token of recognition to the clergyman.

Mr. Bouverie only bowed; but the regards of all the company were instantly attracted towards him, too happy, in a place where they went professedly for gaiety, to catch at a fresh object of amusement.

“She has lost her sister lately,” said Mr. Trelauney to Mr. Bouverie, with an air of condescension imperative, as if he must be answered.

“She has,” replied Mr. Bouverie, very distantly, and slightly bending to the Jove-like inclination of the man of taste and science.

“Very unfortunate!” observed the thin man, presenting an orange to the maiden lady.

“How distressing!” sighed forth the spinster.

“I have heard, I know not how true, that she was going to be married to the Baronet, before his attachment to Lady Marchmont,” said Miss Roberts, in a soft careful tone. “Do you think that was the case, sir?” asked she, addressing Mr. Bouverie.

Mr. Manvers saved him the trouble of reply. “It couldn’t be: I knew them both very well indeed, and am certain they never had any thoughts of each other; if any thing, he may have liked her sister, but that is problematical.”

Mr. Bouverie was angry with himself for feeling relieved by this monstrous falsehood: and he longed for dinner to terminate, that he might be relieved, not only from a conversation odious to him, but from the pressure of his own pent-up vexation that Sir Charles had been in the neighbourhood of Constance, and that her feelings might have been pained,

and her mind, perhaps, unsettled by a meeting with him.

“Has Miss Courtenay money?” asked Mr. Trelauney of Mr. Manvers, in a tone somewhat softened.

“O no; no fortune, nor family either,” returned Mr. Manvers.

“You are below contempt,” thought Mr. Bouverie.

“Is there any possibility of getting acquainted with this divinity?” inquired Mr. Crump, the country gentleman, as he passed the claret round.

“Mr. Manvers can introduce you,” said Trelauney, with a grim smile, which finished with a sneer.

Mr. Bouverie could scarcely sit out the conversation.

“O! I—I,” said Manvers, “have danced with the girl, but it is quite impossible, and would be very unprofitable for me to keep up acquaintance with every damsel I am obliged to change sides and back again with. In fact, I can’t be at the trouble.”

“Very good! capital!” said the thin gentleman, who was making close siege to a melon.

Mr. Crump looked, however, even more indignant than Mr. Bouverie.

“ In my younger days, sir,” said he, looking at Manvers, “ I should have thought myself honoured by the glance of a pretty woman, let her fortune be what it would, and her family related to whom they pleased—the devil, if they liked it. I should have been flattered, if she’d even asked me to shut the door ; and d—n it, I could not help it even now, although I never shall see fifty-five again.”

“ The ladies are taking alarm at your emphatic language,” said Trelauney, seeing Lady Colocynth, followed by the maiden lady, preparing to depart.

“ Thank you ; I never yet frightened any woman away from me,” returned Mr. Crump ; “ and I can say what some other gentlemen at table cannot, that I have been married three times.”

“ Very good, very fair,” dropped from the lips of the thin gentleman.

“ And intend to be married again ?” inquired Mr. Trelauney, in a tone intended for a jest, but sounding like a satire.

“Very true—exactly so,” was heard as usual.

“Why, I have no heart-ache at present,” replied Mr. Crump, looking towards the door. “Can’t say what might happen to me if I were introduced to the lady whom Mr. Manvers holds so cheap.”

“You would be very safe,” returned Manvers; “that is, if you look at women as one should do at every thing, for its utility. Give me a woman with ten thousand pounds, one who pays her way—mends her husband’s—”

“O Jupiter!” cried Mr. Crump.

“—Stockings—preserves and pickles—”

“Very good,” said the thin gentleman.

“—Reads her Bible.”

“Stuff!” said Mr. Trelauney.

“And I should very soon get accustomed to her face: that is all fancy, habit, taste, and such like.”

Mr. Bouverie waited to hear no more, but apologizing to the officer at the top of the table, who now himself became drowsy, he left the room.

It was some time after he had retired to his

own apartment, before the irritation of his feelings subsided. The clear air, and the soft influence of moonlight, however, as he walked towards Miss Monckton's cottage, aided in tranquillizing the emotions of vexation and contempt by which his well-governed mind was disturbed but not mastered. The peaceful scene on which the moonshine "slept," seemed all too pure for the gross spirits whom he had left, to witness. Aroused from his reflections only occasionally by the passing good night of the villager, or the distant barking of a house-dog upon the heights, the mind of Mr. Bouverie became attuned to the tranquillity by which the scene was characterized. As he approached Miss Monckton's cottage, and heard the full and sweet tones of Constance's well-cultivated voice, as she sung without accompaniment, he paused for a few moments, and then sprang to the door with an action of impatience, to know what would be his reception, an anxiety those who are absent from an object, intensely loved, must have experienced. Constance had risen from her seat just before he entered; she greeted him with a smile, such as he had not seen upon

her lips since Emily died, and met him with a degree of pleasure which, if it was not fond, was at least cordial. Miss Monckton was reclining upon a sofa, and saw, while she seemed not to see, the meeting of two persons in whom much of her earthly happiness was centered. Mr. Bouverie thought he had seldom seen Constance look more beautiful. The little mourning cap, bordered with white muslin, which she sometimes wore underneath her bonnet, had been allowed by her to remain, from heedlessness, after her evening walk. It partly shaded her face, to which the mountain air had already given a slight carnation tinge, transparent almost, and delicate as those little flitting radiant clouds which sometimes hover near the horizon at sunset. The careless and profuse ringlets of her chesnut hair were parted from a brow, which Mr. Bouverie had of late been accustomed to see overshadowed by anguish, but upon which serenity, blended with innocence, “as pure as moonlight sleeping upon snow,” reposed; whilst the sombre garb which she wore was contrasted finely with the white arms and neck, which were not in her, and are not in

woman, so admirable of themselves, as that their seemly proportions blend into one expressive whole. Mr. Bouverie, as he gazed at her with a feeling somewhat approaching to idolatry, fondly hoped that time, and change, and reflection, had perhaps wrought a desirable alteration in the current of her ideas, and that they were paving the way to the completion of his hopes; and he was, in part, correct in this notion, although much of the contentment which Constance now evinced, arose from a resolution to which she had brought herself, to confess the state of her feelings to him; to give him the simple, but painful narrative of her first attachment, and to leave the result to his delicacy, confidence, and love. Thus resolved, she felt that her heart was lightened of a weight too heavy to be borne. She wished Mr. Bouverie to know exactly what chances of happiness he had to reckon on, in engaging himself to her; she trusted that henceforth too much would not be expected from her; or, if he could not trust to time and further intimacy, for the progress which he was to make in her affections, she hoped, or said to herself that

she hoped, he would altogether withdraw his suit. Armed with this resolution, she proposed to ascend the heights, on the following morning, with Mr. Bouverie, and to show him some of the haunts which she had already discovered and enjoyed. The evening passed cheerfully away : Mr. Bouverie's countenance beamed with satisfaction ; and in his voice, his looks, nay, even his words, he ventured, for the first time, to show that he was—an accepted lover. A pang sometimes shot through Constance's heart when she saw his increasing passion, and incipient security ; yet she meant not to blight his hopes, but only to show him the difficulties which he had to encounter. Poor Constance ! she loved to see others happy, and she would have contributed by every ordinary means to render Mr. Bouverie so ; yet could she not, at present, reconcile herself to the acknowledged attentions, which implied that all was settled, and the privileged manner of an avowed engagement. Whilst common topics were discussed, or kindness or friendship merely were called into play, she was animated, easy, and even, despite all bitter recol-

lections, playful : but, when the tone either of Miss Monckton's or Mr. Bouverie's remarks implied an authorized and peculiar intimacy between her and him, a word, a look from either of her companions, seemed to wither all her evanescent gaiety, and to dispel the sunshine from her countenance.

Contrary to her usual custom, after Mr. Bouverie's departure, she hastened to bid Miss Monckton good night, afraid of encountering her commendations, or of receiving her congratulations upon the improved state of the terms on which she stood with Bouverie. The long and confidential midnight talk was therefore exchanged for a hasty salutation, which closed the evening, to which Constance, from succeeding events, often looked back with a mixture of pain and pleasure.

The next morning was one of peculiar brightness and joyousness. Malvern, with its blue hills and sheltered cottages, its ancient, comely church, and distant fertile plains, looked more than usually lovely. The peace, the healthful, happy calm of the scene seemed, as it were, to act as a mute reproof to imaginary griefs, or to

angry passions, or acts of unkindness which could disturb the feelings inspired by so fair a subject for contemplation. With Constance, prone as she was to enjoy, and to gladden others, the pleasures of summer, the real merriment of nature, recalled to her saddened mind the joy which she, who was lost, was wont to take in them. “The birds, the flowers, the laughing landscape, in which Emily used to delight,—sing, and bloom, and smile as ever—O! wherefore is she not here? Why has the grave closed on one as buoyant and lovely, as the loveliest of nature’s objects? But these, she and I shall no more enjoy together.” Such were the reflections which rendered her silent, and even abstracted, as she walked with Mr. Bouverie along the then straggling village; but as they passed the library, her reflections were interrupted by the appearance of a coterie, formidable to pass, which stood near its open door. Lady Colocynth, Miss Roberts, and one or two other ladies, were in the full current of gossip, and Mr. Bouverie caught the expected sounds of “How am I looking to-day?—Come, that’s well!—that’s right!—that puts me in spirits!”—and the

“Exactly so—very true” of the thin gentleman. He received and returned an automaton-like bow from Mr. Trelauney, and overtook, to his discomfiture, Mr. Manvers strolling along the road with unbrushed dusty shoes, a hat that defied wind or weather to make it worse, and a coat which might have come out of, and ought to have gone back to, Monmouth-street. He moved so heavily along, that they could not, with their utmost slowness, avoid overtaking him; and it was in vain that they endeavoured to pass him. He touched his rough, it may be presumed, water-proof hat, for it had evidently withstood many a smart shower, and began—

“How do you do? Which way are you going? I can show you a pretty view from the heights!—How are you, Miss Courtenay; and how’s Miss What-dye-call-her, that you live with? Are you living at Malvern just now?”

“I am, sir,” replied Constance, with a gentle bow of her head.—“Good morning.”

“Nay, that’s not the right way; if you don’t know the hills, I’ll pilot you. There’s not a finer free-stone for building than these; and with respect to those apple-grounds, they are

said to yield, of cider apples, five thousand hog——”

“Thank you ; do not let us trouble you any farther,” said Mr. Bouverie, drawing off, “ we can find our way.”

“ O ! it’s no trouble, I am used to mountains—not indeed to such poor little hillocks as these, but Cape Law, Ben Nevis, or the Kipps.”

“ Can such a thing come from that land of gigantic heights, and of noble associations ?” was the remark which occurred to Constance.

“ I have made several pedestrian tours,” continued Manvers ; “ I can out-walk any of your southerons, although a Cheshire man myself, but of the true Scotch breed. I walked last year through Hampshire and the Isle of Wight ; the year before through Normandy, and this summer through Wales.”

“ I wish he would walk away now,” thought Mr. Bouverie.

“ He is one of those people,” reflected Constance, “ who seem to think, if they move over a certain portion of land, that they enjoy the benefits of travelling. A mail-coach horse may do as much.”

They neither of them however spoke ; and Mr. Manvers, suddenly stopping, gave them the full benefit of seeing his broad heavy countenance, by turning round full in their faces.

“ Well, I declare I’ll never interrupt a tête-à-tête again, though it’s rather a relief to get to silent people, after Trelauney. But as neither of you seem disposed for conversation, I’ll make my way home again. Only as you neither of you seem to know which way you are going, let me recommend you not to get into yonder bog—the course of true love never did run smooth—he ! he !—nor to try yon cliff, but to ——”

“ Thank you,” said Mr. Bouverie, pushing on, too happy to get rid of him ; “ we will not detain you, Mr. Manvers.”

They left him standing upon a resting point, looking at a distance like one of those thick-set, stunted shrubs which never, by any chance, are blown down. The young pair proceeded up the hill in silence, both feeling the embarrassment of being for the first time alone together as acknowledged lovers ; for Miss Monckton, afraid as she was of Constance taking some precipitate

step, had never yet left them together. At length they began to discuss the beauties of the scenery, the peculiar charms of a hilly country, and all such subjects as were foreign to their own feelings. It was noon, and the stillness of a summer's day sat upon every object, from the midway birch or pine, affording a shelter to the timorous bird, to the limberest sprig of heather that garnished the hill top. The sheep which had clambered up the heights, seemed to be fixed to their place of pasture and repose, as if spell-bound, and all the activity of nature appeared to be suspended, even in the "little motes that people the sunbeams." Constance, seated by her companion, on the brow of a small promontory, which rose on the Herefordshire side of the ridge of Malvern hills, seemed for some moments to have sunk into the languor by which all objects, both animate and inanimate, are, perhaps, agreeably infected in a summer's day. Mr. Bouverie at length began :

" I fear," he said, " that the painful remembrance which rendered you so desirous, Constance, of leaving Newberry, has not been much mitigated by your removal from a place where

you suffered so much. Last night your wonted vivacity seemed again to dawn upon us—to-day you are again dejected.”

“My dejection,” replied Constance, with a sigh, “is not only occasioned by the recollection of what—of what death has taken from me; I sorrow, at times, for the living also.”

“If I am a cause of sorrow to you, Constance,” replied Mr. Bouverie gravely, “that is a source of distress which may soon be removed—only reconcile me to the relinquishment of my fondest hopes, by telling me that it is impossible that I should ever gain your affections, and I—I—”

But Constance interrupted the remainder of this sentence;—“Do not misconstrue me,” she cried. “Had it been so, I should never have given you the assurance which Miss Monckton conveyed to you: believe me when I say, that I have no wish to retract it; I have only one source of anxiety, that you should clearly understand my feelings, judge of my motives, and know—all that has befallen me. I have so much reliance,” she continued, extending her hand to him, “on your goodness, your judg-

ment, your generosity, that I appeal to your counsels on this, as I would on every other circumstance of my life, in full confidence that you will direct me aright. Our interests cannot be now divided; what militates against your happiness, must injure mine; and besides, I can no longer, by my silence, deceive you—you shall know all, and then judge whether an engagement between us can produce mutual happiness.”

She spoke with the haste and precipitation of one, who has wound herself up to a certain pitch, and fears to stop, lest she should not have resolution enough to take up the thread of her discourse.

“Do not be distressed about me,” replied Mr. Bouverie, gratefully pressing the fair hand which he held: “nothing can shake my dependance upon the integrity of your mind: you may say what may wound, perhaps bitterly mortify me, but you cannot lessen my entire trust in your highmindedness and sincerity.”

“Indeed,” said Constance, “I cannot charge myself with intentional wrong. At any rate, I will now, by a sacrifice of my own feelings,

do what is right. You are not aware, perhaps, that the engagement, into which we have agreed to enter, is not the first that I have been rash enough to form, in the course of my short experience—would that it were !”

They were both silent for a few moments—Constance covered her face with her hands. “ Did you know of it ?” she said.

“ No ; I did not think it had gone so far,” replied Mr. Bouverie after a pause, and with a deep sigh.

“ I will not blame him,” continued Constance, “ but I will call it unfortunate that we ever met, and ever exchanged vows, which could only end in the dishonour of one, and in the misery of another. I will confess to you, Mr. Bouverie, that he had from me a preference so strong, that it has been with difficulty eradicated :—it was the first—but it was not lightly given, nor has it been lightly withdrawn. It was won on the one side with sedulous endeavours, it has been relinquished on the other, with the most poignant anguish.” Her tears fell, as she spoke, but she was far less distressed than her hearer.

“Having told you this,” she pursued, “the rest is easily conceived. The heart which you have sought to gain, has been deeply, but not irretrievably wounded. I trust, if I have a woman’s weakness, I have enough of a woman’s spirit to shake off an entanglement which would now disgrace me, and I have done so.”

She spoke with something of her wonted animation, but her voice subsided into a softer tone, as she continued, “Much have I achieved by determined employment, by the endeavour, at least, to forget : and much has calamity atchieved for me. Yes, dear Emily ! whilst you are at rest in Heaven, your sister shall struggle with her fate, and her failings, till we meet where tears and temptations shall be no more. But I must confess to you, that if it be expected of me, to feel a total indifference to the fortunes of him whom I once loved—if I am required, in becoming affianced to another, by him, or by my own conscience, to pass an act of oblivion over that portion of my life which I once passed with other hopes and other views, I fear my heart must be much changed before I can realize these expectations. I have now told

you all. What I have chiefly to ask of you is, to weigh the probable happiness, or misery, of an engagement entered into with one who is thus situated ; and another request is, that you will not blame Sir Charles."

" I will endeavour," said Mr. Bouverie, " to forgive him for the injury he has rendered me, and, what is still more, for the misery which he has caused you. I thank you for this confidence, Constance, which explains to me much that has embarrassed and misled me. I can truly say that my mind is relieved by knowing the extent of my misfortune ; for I see, but too plainly, how deeply your affections have been engaged to another. But I have no right to repine."

They both rose as he spoke, and proceeded to wend their way down the hill. There was a mournful gravity on Mr. Bouverie's countenance, which bespoke some painful impressions which he did not care to disclose. Constance knew not why, that she should feel apprehensive of the consequences of their conversation.

" I fear I have wounded you," she said, as they got into a more level walk ; " O, if you knew how I value your friendship, how proud I

am of your preference, and how truly you have my esteem !”

“ But it is not easy to unsay what you have said, Constance ;—the value which I entertain for your esteem, the hope which I may have had of gaining your affections, all fade before the conviction, established from your own assertion, that you have loved another—loved too, so truly, and so recently, that there can be but little chance of the same passion being again excited.”

Constance made no reply—she could neither gainsay what he urged, nor point out any decision which should influence their future connexion. She loved Mr. Bouverie somewhat better than if he had been her brother, and she sought, by those feminine attentions which, from a young and beautiful woman, seldom fail of their effect, to restore him to his wonted serenity.

“ Come now,” she said, half playfully, “ be not so dolorous ; though I may have entertained a wild and groundless preference for another, I liked you first—I had a holy reverence for you,

from the moment that I heard you preach in St. Michael's."

"Thank you; but I desire a less holy sentiment," answered Mr. Bouverie, with a melancholy smile; "but I will not be so unreasonable as to require of you what you cannot give."

"You can act as you think best," returned Constance, with a slight degree of petulance in her manner, for she had been accustomed to rely upon Mr. Bouverie's attachment as a thing impossible to lose. He was silent, and they descended into the road which led to Miss Monckton's dwelling. Just then a travelling carriage passed them, in which was seated a gentleman, whose gaze, as it met the involuntary glance of Constance, struck her dumb—it was Sir Charles. The look was instantaneous, but she knew it to be the Baronet by a low and ostentatious bow from Mr. Spencer behind. She walked, scarcely knowing which way she went, and leaning on Mr. Bouverie's arm, till they arrived at Miss Monckton's dwelling.

CHAPTER XII.

Are we not here now—and gone in a moment?

STERNE.

I alone,
Preserv'd for further woe and wretchedness,
Live on.

CITY OF THE PLAGUE.

“I AM very weary,” said Constance, as she opened the garden gate, “and here is Sarah coming out to tell us, no doubt, that dinner is waiting.—But, good Heavens! what is the matter? You are as pale as death, Sarah.—Is Miss Monckton ill?”—and without waiting for a reply, she bounded up the steps, and ran into her friend’s sleeping-room.

“Alas, sir!—alas, Mr. Bouverie! my mistress is dead, sir!” said Sarah to Mr. Bouverie, who was walking into the house—“she was seized with some kind of a fit about an hour ago, and expired, without uttering a word, in my arms.”

“This is most awful,” said Mr. Bouverie, turning as pale as his informant.—“Where is Miss Courtenay?—Was every thing done?—O, why were we absent?”

A scream of agony from Miss Monckton’s apartment, at this moment, struck his ear. He rushed to the chamber of death!

“Constance—my dearest Constance!” he cried, clasping her in his arms, as she stood gasping, and almost frantic, by the bed; “every thing was done—be composed, and be assured that she suffered little.”

“She is gone!” cried Constance, “and—I am left alone!”

“No, not alone, my beloved, my dearest Constance,” said Mr. Bouverie, fondly supporting her.

“Do not you leave me too,” she cried, as she leaned her head upon his shoulder. “But O! why should I grieve for myself? My dearest, kindest friend,” she continued, bursting into tears, and kneeling down by the bedside, “that you should have been taken from us when your Constance was away—that I should not have had the poor privilege of watching your last

moments—of telling you how much I prized all your disinterested kindness ; how bitterly I repented of every careless or hasty word that could have pained you.—O, Miss Monckton, my dear Miss Monckton ! it is too much to bear !”

She kissed the cold hand, which still firmly grasped the sheet, which in the last mortal thrill of pain it had seized.

“ You, that without a natural tie, have loved me, loved us both as a mother—you, whose only weakness was loving us too well—are now gone to join my Emily, and O may Constance soon be summoned also.” She hid her face in the bed, and groaned in the bitterest anguish.

“ Let me advise you to withdraw her from the room, sir,” said the surgeon, who now entered. Perhaps it may be a comfort to know that this poor lady’s fate was inevitable. Some vessel has given way, I suspect—an awful, but a merciful death.”

“ Of that I am convinced,” replied Mr. Bouverie ; “ and to a mind so prepared, the sufferings of the dying bed were not requisite to prepare it for another world : a sudden death, though generally a source of compassion, is in

this case, as far as we can see, a dispensation of mercy : she has been spared the parting from what was dear to her." His voice, which trembled, here became almost inaudible—" She has been spared protracted bodily suffering. But how shall we dare to say that we love our Maker, who has recalled her to himself, if we do not render up his best gifts to us back again with submission? Come, Constance," he said, gently drawing her from the bed, " the pure spirit which has fled from these poor remains will be best satisfied, if consciousness of earthly things be permitted, by beholding you resigned and patient."

She rose, for she had so long confided in spiritual matters to Mr. Bouverie, that his influence over her was unbounded : he placed her arm within his, and they left the room. Constance, when she found herself in the other apartment, threw herself into a chair in an agony of grief, which forbade her to " give sorrow words." The furniture, the books, every thing conveyed to her a sense of the recent presence of the friend whom she had lost ;—there was her work table, still occupied by those little sources of

occupation familiar to the eye of her bereaved companion. The knitting lay upon the floor, as if dropped from the unconscious hand in the last death-like struggle; the Bible was opened at the passage which Constance had left her calmly perusing. Her little dog slept by the fire, raising his head from time to time with a wistful look around the room, as if in search of some one—an open letter was within the half-opened work-box.

“Do you think,” said Constance, at length, with a deep sigh, to Mr. Bouverie, who sat in stillness, “that any thing could have saved her?”

“I should think not,” replied the minister; “besides that we were not here, was a circumstance dictated by the same Providence which decreed her fate. Nothing is so harassing, and nothing, Constance, can be so futile, as looking at secondary causes. Even our best endeavours, which nature and reason bid us to use, if not prospered by divine will, are as chaff blown by the wind. Wilful neglect, or blindness to danger, must, as they ought to do, inspire severe self-accusation; but where attention, di-

rected by the best judgment we possess, has been bestowed, or where it could not, by absence, be bestowed, the mourner may at least escape the stings of self-reproach."

"I ought to do so," replied Constance; "but O, in Emily's case I thought I might have seen her danger sooner; and how often have I not, in my own mind, rehearsed the details of her last hours, and revolved in my mind all that was done, all that might have been done."

"It is a difficult question," returned Mr. Bouverie, "how far we are to trust to the efficacy of human endeavours; for myself, I believe that they are, as the wind and rain, agents in the hand of God, but mischievous or efficacious as He, the first great Cause, prospers their operations. But, my dear Constance, in such bereavements, let us resolve to turn our thoughts from the human character of our departed friends, to the heavenly attributes which they have now assumed."

"And is that blessed change immediate?" asked Constance, as she raised her eyes with momentary transport towards heaven.

"Such is the popular impression, which, inde-

pendant of all reasoning, actuates our notions. Such was the impression of the afflicted and heroic Jeremy Taylor in one of his letters, when alluding to the death of his fourth, and last surviving son; for he, Constance, was a man purified, and elevated by the severest afflictions, and those in the tenderest points; for all his attainments, all his noble qualities, were blended with the softest domestic affections—with a love for his children in particular.”

“And did he lose them all—all?” said Constance; “and how, how did he bear his loss?”

“As far as I recollect, he speaks of his last resigned treasure, a boy of four years old, just spared to him long enough to take a strong hold upon the father’s heart, and carried off by the cruel small-pox—he speaks of his lost child in these terms: ‘But now he rejoices in his little orb, whilst we think, and sigh, and long to be as he is.’ A passage, as I have ever thought, exquisite for the deep sense of parental love and sorrow which it conveys; but more to be admired still, for the simple, yet perfect expression of that faith by which the dead in the Lord are depicted to us, as in the enjoyment of celestial bliss; a

bliss which will consist, probably, in the intensity of love for God—the extension of benevolence—the unalloyed indulgence of our pure affections here; but for resignation, there will be no exercise, where there will be no sorrow.”

“Alas!” said Constance, “is it wrong to say that I long for that holy rest? that I sigh but to render myself fit for it—that I would give the whole of my future existence to see Emily, were it but for an instant—to hear her voice, to clasp her in my arms, to feel that I had one tie, at least, to reconcile me with my probation here.”

She wept bitterly, as she continued, “And now, the last call for my exertions, the last tie to a weary existence, is withdrawn from me, is it selfish to repine at their departure? But I grieve you, who have already grieved so much for me. Forgive it, and counsel me now, how to act,” she continued, as she rose; and drying her tears, recovered some portion of her wonted fortitude.

“Every arrangement relative to our lost friend, I will take upon myself,” replied Mr. Bouverie, with a forced calmness; “for yourself,

your future destination must be determined by yourself only."

"You will not leave me desolate, to my own wretchedness, or to the cold care of those to whom destiny has consigned me," cried Constance, with great emotion.

"I can never desert you, as a friend, Constance; and never will," replied Mr. Bouverie; "but in respect to your inclinations, I will not interfere with your happiness; but let us wave this subject for the present, and think of me only as a brother."

"Ah! in that capacity I should love you sincerely," answered Constance, in her usual unsophisticated manner. "Then you will not leave me," she said, grasping his arm with the fervour of one who dreads the desertion of an only friend. Her voice, her earnest, and almost tender manner, the loneliness of her situation, and her afflicted state, overcame for a moment the secret resolutions which Mr. Bouverie had formed respecting his engagement with one who loved him not. He coloured deeply, and, as he held her hand fondly within his, a tear trembled in his eye.

“ To-day, I must leave you for a time, dear Constance,” he said, with great emotion ; “ but to-morrow I shall return, to leave you no more, till you are again at home.”

“ At home ! I will not, I cannot go back to Newberry,” said Constance, shuddering ; “ and where indeed can I go ?”

“ Then you shall not go back,” replied Mr. Bouverie, soothingly ; for he felt that he could humour every fancy of hers, even more unreasonable than this ; “ other arrangements can easily be made, when I return.”

“ And why must you go ?” asked Constance, still clinging to him.

“ I have business : and besides, now,” he answered, blushing deeply, “ it would not be proper for me to remain with you.”

He spoke with the hesitation and modesty of a man who truly and purely loves, and whose delicacy of sentiment is such, that he would sooner die than that the faintest tinge of reproach should be attached to the object of his affection.

“ Then we must part,” exclaimed Constance ; “ and a sad misgiving comes over me, that we

shall not meet again. I see death around me—what if his destroying touch should rend you from us? What if I, the last of my family, should be summoned—Alas! why cannot I go?”

She spoke with that kind of superstitious horror, which is apt to infect the mind too severely tried. The world seemed all a tragedy to her, and she the fated victim of the drama.

It was long, very long, before Mr. Bouverie could leave her, and when he did, it was almost evening, and he acknowledged to her that he had some distance to travel, upon urgent business. At length he departed, and as his carriage drove away from the door, Constance felt what it is to be truly alone. The servants brought up tea, for dinner had been refused, lighted the candles, and arranged the room, just as if Miss Monckton were still in being, and were about to pass the evening with Constance. Supper-time came, and the sympathizing Sarah found Miss Courtenay in the same attitude that she had left her, her face resting upon her hands, leaning upon the little work-table where poor

Miss Monckton had sat. Bedtime came also, and Constance was in vain urged by Sarah to retire to rest. "She shall not be left, miss," said the poor girl, crying, "for Mrs. Simpson and I will watch to-night; it is what my poor dear mistress would have wished, if she had been alive; for she always preferred my sitting up to any one else."

"No, Sarah, I will remain where I am," replied Constance; "not that I wish you and Mrs. Simpson to neglect your sacred charge; but I cannot go to bed. With lights and books my feelings may be endurable," thought she; "and I shall have the poor consolation of paying to her remains this tribute, of so much importance in the eyes of the vulgar. And Sarah," added she, aloud, "you shall not lose a kind mistress. I shall take you into my service, if you wish it; and in all worldly comforts your situation shall be the same. Good night, go down stairs, and sit by the fire, unless I ring for you."

Sarah, much consoled, for her sorrow was by no means purely disinterested, descended to her

companion for the night, leaving Constance in the sitting apartment, which was next to that of the deceased.

For several hours Constance remained tolerably-composed. Whilst she read, or wrote letters of business, the awful stillness—awful, because associated with the idea of death, did not strike upon her nerves. She had a short and restless sleep, too, upon the sofa; but awoke, with that start of affright which an agitated mind often causes to break our repose. The unsnuffed dim candles, the distinct ticking of a watch, the murmurs of the wind, unbroken by human sounds, sounded to her feverish imagination as so many death-notes, as wailings of the afflicted, or warnings to the unprepared. Suddenly a desire seized her to see unnoticed and alone, the clay cold image of what lately had life, and sense, and motion. She rose, and taking one of the candles, walked with unsteady pace into the adjoining apartment. It was already dimly lighted at the foot and head of the bed; the curtains were undrawn, and the outline of the long and emaciated form of the deceased was seen through the light covering

thrown over the body ; a cloth concealed the face. Constance had no superstitious fears ; she had also an habitual consciousness of God's presence, that great inspirer of fortitude, and guardian of virtue. Her mind was, however, in a state of high excitement ; her frame was worn out with fatigue and the oppression of anguish, which often produces the effect of violent bodily exertion. On entering the room, therefore, she became, contrary to her expectation, giddy and confused, and found herself obliged to place the candle, which she held, upon the nearest table. She, however, recovered herself, and walked with firmness to the side of the bed, where she could most easily have access to the body of her friend. But before she had resolution to remove the covering from the face, poor Constance sunk down by the bed in a tremor which no religious trust, no suggestions of reason could controul. Her spirits were wholly cast down, her resolution vanquished. The recollection of the former horrors of a death-bed crowded into her mind ; an indescribable awe overwhelmed her : by a delusion not uncommon, she thought she saw the body heave ; she thought

she perceived the curtains of the bed shake; even her own shadow on the opposite wall affrighted her; yet she essayed to move away the veil which hid the features of her friend from her. But it was too much; unwonted coldness and terror seized her, and with a wild scream she fell upon the insensible corpse below, almost equally senseless.

It was some hours before Constance entirely recovered her recollection. When she revived she was in her own room; daylight was breaking, Sarah was standing by her, rubbing her cold hand and feet, as she lay extended on the bed. She felt as if she had been raised from the grave. She scarcely dared to ask when and where they had found her; her head throbbed, and she felt as if it would madden her to touch upon the subject. At times a frightful panic seemed to seize her, then she became restless, and impatient even of the gentle restraints which Sarah pressed upon her. In this way passed the day after Miss Monckton's death. Towards evening she became more composed, dressed, and went into the apartment where she had been sitting the night before.

A cheerful fire had been lighted, and Sarah, who feared to leave her, stood near her, occupied in a little needlework. Constance felt a comfort in her presence. "And am I then reduced to this," thought she; "reduced to feel gratitude for the bare company of a servant, without one idea in common? Alas! what dependant beings we are!" She resolved to employ herself in arranging the few relics of poor Miss Monckton, which remained in the apartment, and with this intent, she busied herself in setting in order the work-box before alluded to. While thus occupied, a letter, written in a well-known hand, met her glance. Her own name struck her eye, and without considering whether she was doing right or wrong, she read the following lines.

"TO MISS MONCKTON.

"My dear Madam,

"I have decided to leave Malvern, because I cannot think that it will be agreeable for yourself and your friend to meet me, nor can I suppose but that such rencontres must occasionally take place. I trust that you will give

me some credit for this resolution : I deserve it, I assure you, all things considered. Perhaps upon the strength of such good conduct, I may be allowed one indulgence ; to beg Miss Courtenay to receive my heart-felt condolences upon her loss, a loss which I have mourned, as those mourn, who grieve not only for the dead, but for survivors. Adieu, my dear Miss Monckton ; and if we ever meet again on this side of the grave, I trust it may be under happier auspices.

“ Your most obedient,

“ And affectionate, humble servant,

“ CHARLES MARCHMONT.

“ Malvern, September 6th, 1807.”

This letter was dated the very day of Miss Monckton's death, and a few unfinished lines in reply, were scribbled on a half sheet of paper, evidently for the purpose of being re-written. “ It was, then, Sir Charles,” thought Constance, “ whom I met as we returned from the heights.” This idea involved a thousand considerations. Long, long, did she ponder over the few lines written by the pen of the Baronet.

The well-known style, the delicacy of his feelings towards herself, and his allusion to her sorrows, affected her sensibly. She could not deem it wrong that he should, from her own hand, learn that their common friend had sunk into the grave. It was, an unhappy error:—but she knew it not to be possible, or at least not probable, for a friendly interest to subsist between persons once fondly attached, without exciting some latent sparks of their former passion. Feeling, as she thought, conscious, that every thing, save a sisterly and disinterested regard for his happiness, had died away in her mind, she fancied that she might, without danger or impropriety, afford him the consolation of knowing that she had forgiven the sufferings of which he had been the source. The impulse was a generous one, but it was eventually injurious, and nearly fatal to her peace of mind. The imprudence of her conduct became afterwards, even to herself, sufficiently obvious, and it could only be excused by the excitement under which both her mental and bodily powers laboured, and which, in the case of recent events, is apt to make us think actions allow-

able, which, in cooler moments, we should strongly reprobate. Under this excitement, and with a trembling hand, Constance addressed these words to Sir Charles Marchmont.

“ It is my lot to transmit to you the few, and broken lines which my friend addressed to you—the last she ever wrote. O, Sir Charles ! she is gone hence ! It has pleased God to summon her, quite hastily, but not, as we humbly trust, unprepared. Her last mention of you was kind ; and, that she had, as I am informed, a friendly interview with you, a short time before her decease, is, now, a source of comfort to the afflicted

“ CONSTANCE COURTFENAY.”

This letter Constance directed to Marchmont, for she dreaded its falling into the hands of Lady Marchmont, who was, for aught that she knew, still at Malvern : she sent it to the post therefore by Sarah ; and then, having completed her little occupations, she sat in melancholy reverie, awaiting either the return of

Mr. Bouverie, or the closing in of another miserable night of loneliness and grief.

It happened, however, by one of those vexatious but not uncommon casualties which occur in life, that Mr. Bouverie had arrived in Malvern, about half an hour previous to the dispatch of this letter, and having left his carriage and other appurtenances at the Foley Arms, he was proceeding on foot to the residence of Miss Courtenay, when he encountered Sarah on her way to the post-office. Of course, his first and eager inquiry was concerning her whom he had left in all the bitterness of a recently inflicted deprivation, and his question, so far as health was implied, was answered in a manner almost as satisfactory as he had reason to expect it would be.

“Miss Courtenay is better, Sir, much better ; though she was very ill last night—very ill indeed, Sir ; but she has been well enough this evening to write a letter, Sir,” producing, as she spoke, the epistle with which Constance had entrusted her.

The address, to “Sir Charles Marchmont,”

Marchmont Park, caught the eye of Mr. Bouverie; the notion instantly occurred to him, that Constance had written to apprise Sir Charles of Miss Monckton's death; but he could not, of course, divine, that she had been induced to do so, by the letter which Sir Charles had written to her deceased friend.

Mr. Bouverie, like most men of mild, but firm character, was remarkably, and sometimes unhappily, tenacious of an impression when once received. He could not, and he did not conceive, that there was any thing criminal in this action of Miss Courtenay's; but it confirmed his previous apprehensions, that she still cherished a strong interest in Sir Charles Marchmont, and it led to a conviction that no efforts on his own part, no lapse of time, nor closer ties would effectually eradicate that unfortunate prepossession. The present effect of this conclusion was to impel Mr. Bouverie to relinquish all claims upon the affections of Constance; its future consequence was a latent distrust upon that point, which though it might lie dormant for years, was ready to be revived by any event calculated to excite, and nurture it. Rumi-

nating upon what had passed, Mr. Bouverie walked slowly into the apartment, where Constance, whose expectation of seeing him that night was subsiding into despondency, counted each moment. The flush of joy tinged her pallid cheek as he entered; she flew to meet him, with the eagerness of one bereft of all but one object; she grasped his extended hand with a warmth, which was not, however, as usual, returned. Mr. Bouverie greeted her kindly and respectfully, but the tenderness of a lover was either gone, or restrained by some stronger motive. Constance drew back, disappointed, she hardly knew why, and hurt without a reason. It was twilight, and the embers of the fire which Sarah had lighted by way of comfort to "poor dear Miss," alone illuminated the apartment. Mr. Bouverie sat for a few moments, after his entrance, gazing upon these, as if reluctant to begin any topic of conversation: at length he said: "Constance, I have taken the liberty of bringing my sister to you."

"It is very kind, very good," replied Constance, with great humility of tone.

“ You cannot be alone, and I may be obliged to leave you, after a few days; besides, I trust that you will not be displeased with the companion I have ventured to select for you.”

“ With *your* sister—impossible !” exclaimed Constance.

“ And I shall hear, I trust, that you have quite recovered your spirits.”

“ Hear !” thought Constance, but she was silent.

“ I have travelled all night, and, therefore, will retire early ; but if it will be agreeable for you to see my sister to-night, I will bring her to you.”

Constance burst into tears.

“ Wherefore this ebullition of sorrow ? If seeing a stranger be unpleasant to you, I will not urge it, Constance,” said Mr. Bouverie, kindly, but gravely.

“ O, no—no—no—the world contains now none but strangers to me,” replied she still weeping. “ No, I was, I own, disappointed—that you should intend to leave me so soon,

when I have been all alone so long—but if you are fatigued, I will not detain you.”

“I am not fatigued,” answered Mr. Bouverie, his voice softening into somewhat of its wonted tenderness; but he seemed to recollect himself, and continued—“You well know how truly my utmost services are yours, and whilst my society can be either useful or consolatory to you, I will not withdraw it.”

“Withdraw it!” repeated Constance to herself; “has he ever really thought of such a step?” And she said, with a dignity not difficult for her to assume—“Your kindness—your invaluable attentions to one so friendless, can never be forgotten. When they become burthensome to you, I shall be the last person to urge their continuance.” The colour which mounted to her face was succeeded, in an instant, by a death-like paleness. And the heart-searching question, “Am I then deserted?—is he also unkind?” struck to her inmost soul, a pang not hitherto experienced.

Mr. Bouverie rose, and walked hastily from her. In a few moments, he returned, however,

and seated himself again near her. Just then, Sarah, bringing candles into the room, their light chancing to fall upon Constance, her deep dejection, the wreck which a few short hours of intense suffering had already made upon her, and the feverish restlessness of her aching frame, were revealed in their full and painful truth. Mr. Bouverie looked at her till the tears started to his eyes. She had wrapped a large shawl around her heated, yet shivering frame, and she sat, bent forward, her hand pressed upon her forehead, in an attitude expressive of repressed, but acute misery.

“ You are ill, Constance,” said Mr. Bouverie to her, when the servant had withdrawn; “ your troubles have, at last, been too much for you.”

“ Would that they had !” answered Constance, raising her eyes to heaven ; “ I should then trouble no one long.”

“ That is an ungrateful feeling, Constance—ungrateful to Heaven,” answered Mr. Bouverie.

“ It is a natural one,” said Constance, “ to

the desolate; but I wish for no sympathy: that I must expect no longer—for me it is buried in the grave.” She spoke petulantly, yet almost instantly her injustice and ingratitude were apparent to her. “He has travelled all night for me,” thought she; “he has brought her whom he perhaps best loves, to be with me, and do I reward him thus?”

“Forgive me,” she cried, with her usual candour, “I am ill, and feverish, and irritable. I am truly sensible of all your kindness—and—I have been nothing but a source of pain to you.”

“If you have, it has been my own fault, Constance, and I intend to amend my error. You shall never feel that your dependance upon me as a friend, rivets bonds, which I believe you desire to break. I release you from them entirely. And now permit me to act as a friend to you without any reference to my own *past* feelings, and fondly, and foolishly harboured wishes.”

“Decide what is best for your own happiness,” Constance began with firmness to say, but her voice sank at the close of her sentence.

“ I am well aware that my decision will render *you* happy, Constance,” answered Mr. Bouverie, with feigned calmness, “ and that must ever be the first consideration for me. And now, let me hope that you will find in my sister, a sister—as you will ever find in me, a brother.”

“ You are too kind,” said Constance, “ but I wish no one to care for me—I can bear my destiny alone. — Unfriended I came to Newberry, unfriended I shall return thither, and there—die.”

A fearful tremor shook her frame as she spoke these words. Mr. Bouverie rose, and hastening to her, supported her, as trying to rise, she sank down again on the sofa. He looked at her woeful and altered face with alarm, and thought, with horror, that perhaps the fate of Emily might be extended to her sister.

“ Be composed, my dear Constance,” he said, “ my ever-beloved friend, for so I must deem you. Tell me,” he continued, gently parting the long ringlets which fell over her

face, from her brow, "where is the pain? is it in this fair forehead? May I turn doctor, and become your physician now?"

"You may, if you please," rejoined Constance, whilst a faint smile played upon her lips. "You are a bad spiritual comforter, but you may be a good medical adviser."

"A bad spiritual comforter, am I, Constance?"

"Yes! if you meant your conversation, to-night, to comfort me."

"I intended that it should, and still do. I think, that when you are yourself, you will thank me for not holding you in trammels." He spoke with less fervour than before, and a gleam of satisfaction stole over his face, that Constance had not acceded to his proposal of dissolving their ill-omened engagement. His strong attachment struggled with his delicacy, and honourable pride. Yet he dreaded a final separation from her far less than her continuance in a constrained and unwelcome bondage to a man whom she scarcely loved, and that man, himself: and in this apprehension, he will meet,

I think, with the sympathy, not of the gross and selfish, but of those who have had some cognizance of that pure sentiment, which elevated and honest minds consider love.

“I will, then, as you advise,” said Constance, after they had discussed some arrangements, “defer seeing your sister till to-morrow, and retire early to rest. You see I am very manageable now; and, O! that I may but sleep!”

“And had you no sleep last night?” asked Mr. Bouverie.

“Not much,” she answered, shuddering, “But tell me how you found your mother—and your sister—is she like you? May I say what I feel and think to her, as I do to you?”

“Even more readily, I hope,” replied Mr. Bouverie, with an enlivened countenance. “I will not say too much of her: you shall judge for yourself. But my dear mother, Constance, would delight you, I know. The sorrows of life, which often render others morose and gloomy, have chastened her spirit, and raised her soul to God, till, like the angels who stand

always in His presence, she has become almost perfect by the constant contemplation of Divine excellence. The children whom she has seen consigned to the tomb, she has parted from, regarding their early departure not as a hardship, if the measure of their lives have been filled up with active piety, or with the innocent, salutary pursuit of knowledge. I am her last surviving son, and to soothe her descent into old age, to render her regrets for those who are gone before, less poignant, will be the chief, perhaps the only solace, of my future life."

He sighed, and Constance sighed too, for his reference to his own fate affected her painfully. She knew that his was no light, no common attachment, and she could not forbear, at times, contrasting it with the selfish passion of Sir Charles, and the heartless manner in which he had not only relinquished her, but even united himself to another. She wished, therefore, to render Mr. Bouverie happy, yet, with these too well-grounded doubts and fears on his mind, she knew that was impossible; nor did she, at present, feel herself in a state

honestly to dispel all these apprehensions. Yet, to relinquish his attentions entirely, and to be with him on the terms of an ordinary friend, gave her, in idea, she knew not why, a sense of mortification even on her own account, and on his, considerable vexation.

The separation for the night was, on both sides, somewhat agitated. Mr. Bouverie felt that he had taken the first step towards the dissolution of their engagement, and he doubted not, upon a review of every past circumstance connected with Constance, that however her kind and grateful feelings might be pained by his proposal in the first instance, she would, on consideration, be only too happy to accede to his proposal. He came, therefore, to the difficult resolution of not touching upon the subject again until Constance should find herself entirely a free agent, no longer dependant upon his kindness only for support under her troubles, nor confined to the society of his family alone. "The anxiety which I now endure," he justly thought, "will fall far short of that which I should suffer, if, after a reluctant mar-

riage of duty on her part, I should find, too late, that her fidelity, her gratitude, her esteem, were mine, whilst her heart still cherished the recollection of another.”

END OF VOLUME II.

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